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The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces

The Muslim Dimension

Thomas S. Szayna

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PREFACE

This report examines the Muslim dimension of the ongoing ethno-national ferment affecting the Soviet armed forces. In particular, it analyzes the impact of the rapidly increasing Muslim cohort on the cohesion of the Soviet military by focusing on factors affecting the ability and reliability of Muslim servicemen today. Problems such as language deficiencies, trainability, and socialization are discussed in detail, as are efforts by the military leadership to ameliorate them. The report also critiques some earlier Western methodologies dealing with the subject and addresses the likely implications of the ethnic ferment for armed forces reform. The report is based on information available as of May 1990.

The report is part of the project "The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces," in the Policy and Strategy Program of RAND's Arroyo Center. It should be of interest to military officials and analysts tasked with assessing the cohesion, reliability, and potential vulnerabilities of the Soviet armed forces.

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SUMMARY

Open ethnic conflict has swept the entire Soviet Union during the last few years. Because of their numbers and their distinctness, the Soviet Muslims present the most serious potential threat to the cohesion of the Soviet state. The Muslims already have had a powerful negative impact on the efficiency of the Soviet military. The problems associated with the Muslims in the Soviet armed forces can be narrowed to two categories: ability and reliability.

ETHNICITY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The major Soviet Muslim ethnic groups are creations of the Soviet regime, dating back to the early Soviet period, when the Soviets attempted to change the Soviet Muslims' loyalties by destroying the Islamic religious infrastructure and by creating new allegiances based on artificially created ethnic distinctions. The Soviet Muslims' attachments to the new ethnic distinctions have become real but the Islamic, Turkic, and regional loyalties were subsumed into the Muslims' concepts of their own ethnic groups. These supra-ethnic identities have reemerged openly during the last few years.

Among the Soviet Muslims, the Central Asians are most numerous and the most unassimilated. They are followed by the Caucasian Muslims. The Volga Muslims are quite different and are the most assimilated of the Muslims. The high fertility rates of the Central Asian and Caucasian Muslims have changed the ethnic makeup of Soviet society. The changing demographic situation is especially noticeable in the younger age cohorts and the ethnic composition of the conscript pool has become the primary problem for the Soviet military.

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE USSR

The Soviet Muslim case fits many of the established patterns of ethnic conflict that other multi-ethnic states have experienced. Soviet Central Asia is a developing region where the more extensive ascriptive views of ethnicity—a cause of special intensity of ethnic conflict—are prevalent. The USSR always has been dominated by the Russians; although a whole gamut of Soviet policies has been aimed at assimilating the non-Russian ethnic groups, Soviet policies in fact denigrate the

Muslims and affirm status distinctions based on ethnicity. An ethnic mobilization of Muslims took place in Central Asia in the seventies against the status distinctions, and Gorbachev's liberalization allowed the ethnic conflict to become overt.

Given the general intractability of ethnic strife, Soviet ethnic problems will not go away and are likely to become much worse. There is a serious potential for massive violence, especially in Central Asia. Because of the advanced stage of ethnic conflict in the USSR, a new union treaty will not eliminate the problem. A Soviet Muslim conscript during the 1990s—coming from an ethnically tense environment and being ethnically mobilized—presents far-reaching problems for the Soviet military.

THE PROBLEM OF ABILITY

Technological changes have accentuated the need for technically capable soldiers. Although Muslim recruits are among the least technically skilled of the Soviet draftees because of educational and linguistic shortcomings, because of demographic pressures the old custom of relegating the Muslims to noncombat support tasks has changed drastically and Muslims now constitute an ever-increasing proportion of combat troops. A Muslim youth usually receives a quality of education inferior to that of a Russian, mainly for reasons of inefficient infrastructure (poor schools, lack of teachers, and the like).

The Muslims' educational deficiencies are a cause of deteriorating Soviet military quality; the language problem is even more serious and, although it is already acute, it is bound to become worse for at least five reasons. First, in an ethnic conflict, language assumes a central significance and its status and extent of use can cause specific conflicts. Second, Soviet language policy has left such a bitter legacy that a backlash has sprung up against the learning of Russian. Third, general problems of education in the Muslim areas are exacerbated for Russian language instruction. Fourth, the native languages of the Soviet Muslims are very different from Russian and extensive, high-quality instruction is needed to have any effect. Fifth, migration patterns portend a lesser Slavic presence in Muslim regions, which will further reduce the use of Russian.

Throughout the seventies, the Soviets tried to improve the knowledge of Russian among the Muslims; they have, however, failed miserably, and an ever-growing percentage of Muslim draftees, some three-quarters by most accounts, cannot communicate in Russian. The crash course in Russian in the military does not begin to address the

problem. Recent measures, such as student draft deferment, have made a bad situation worse and the problem has spread to previously largely Russian services, such as the Air Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces. *There are serious problems of pure ability with Muslim recruits; their educational and linguistic shortcomings threaten the effectiveness of the Soviet military by introducing insurmountable problems to forming efficient and cohesive units.*

THE PROBLEM OF RELIABILITY

The Soviet military historically has distrusted the Muslims. Central Asia and the Caucasus were the most difficult areas of the czarist empire for the Bolsheviks to reconquer and the Muslims' performance in the Soviet military during World War II and in Afghanistan was sub par.

The background of the Soviet Muslims and their experience in the Soviet military fits the profile of an alienated soldier. The principal source of alienation is external to the military and the majority of Muslim soldiers bring their feelings of alienation from the Soviet state and its institutions with them into the military; this is a consequence of the ethnic conflict and the Muslims' ethnic mobilization. The formation of national cliques within Soviet military units, the enormous scale of brutal hazing practices—often ethnically based—in the Soviet military, and a very real prejudice on the part of many officers toward Muslims reinforce the alienation experienced by Muslim soldiers.

The military cannot effectively utilize alienated soldiers, and units with a substantial proportion of alienated soldiers become inefficient—losing morale, proficiency, and discipline. *In ethnically mixed Soviet units, a whole range of variables that together amount to group cohesion seems to have broken down. Such units are unreliable and prone to disintegration in times of stress.*

CRITIQUE OF PREVIOUS WESTERN ANALYSES

Previous studies that focused on the lack of cohesion in the Soviet military underestimated the ethnic problem and unnecessarily emphasized the role of ideological indoctrination as a factor enhancing cohesion. Criticisms of the importance of group cohesion in the Soviet military miss the point for they do not examine adequately the Soviet military organizational structure. The last few years have shown the magnitude of error of some Western analysts regarding the ethnicity effect on the Soviet armed forces. A comparative approach, based on reliable data, would avoid such embarrassments in the future.

SOVIET MILITARY REFORM

The predominantly coercive type of compliance previously used by the Soviet military is no longer suitable, either on the grounds of congruence with societal patterns or based on the requirements of contemporary battlefield conditions. Reform of the Soviet military, such as a shift to a professional force, should be seen in this context. A professional force would solve the problem of alienated and inefficient soldiers and would be in step with the changes taking place in the political environment in the USSR.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethnic conflict in the USSR will not go away and, as long as conscription lasts in the USSR, the Soviet military will continue to have debilitating problems stemming from ethnic conflict. The fact that a significant segment of the Soviet military has been rendered inefficient due to ethnic problems has made the Soviet military inward-looking and externally risk averse. Serious civil-military relations problems will result if the Soviet military's prestige continues to sink.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Ethnic tension is a USSR-wide phenomenon. *Glasnost* has brought countless reports of ethnic conflict that extends from the Chukchi autonomous *okrug* and the Yakut Autonomous Republic to Georgia and the Ukraine. Serious ethnic conflict existed prior to Gorbachev's accession to the post of First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985. However, the liberalization implemented under Gorbachev has emboldened ethnic nationalists and led to openly secessionist movements in several regions of the USSR.

By far the single most serious potential threat to the Soviet state is the loose grouping of Soviet Muslims. The Soviet Muslims' understanding of ethnicity is more akin to that in the developing countries rather than that in Western Europe, making an especially intractable and pervasive type of ethnic conflict.

The major Muslim ethnic groups have extremely high fertility rates and the proportion of Muslims as a whole in the USSR relative to Russians and East Slavs has grown quickly during the past three decades. Combined with little or no population growth among the Slavs, the demographics of Soviet society have changed greatly in just two generations. Nowhere is the new demographic proportion more visible than in the younger age cohorts. The Soviet military, which is a mass, conscript force, has been adversely affected by the changing demographic situation in the USSR, as it must train an ever-growing number of Muslim conscripts into effective soldiers. The types of problems that a Muslim conscript presents for the Soviet military can be narrowed to two categories: ability and reliability. The ethnic problem threatens the effectiveness of the Soviet military in execution of internal and external tasks and there are no easy solutions to it.

OBJECTIVE

This study addresses the implications of the presence of Muslim soldiers in the Soviet military in conditions of increased ethnic tensions. The fundamental question of this study is: What are the specific problems associated with an increased Muslim presence in the Soviet armed forces? A derivative question is: What are the Soviets doing about the problem, and what are their chances of success?

APPROACH AND SCOPE

The changes under Gorbachev have humbled many Western analysts of Soviet affairs, for no one really expected events to unfold as they have. This points to a deeper methodological problem. Consequently, this study takes a specific comparative approach and it contains a brief critique of previous approaches in the concluding section. Rather than basing conclusions on Soviet data, Soviet sources have been applied in a lesser role, to confirm or to question some hypotheses based on theories of ethnicity and military sociology extended to the Soviet case. Many of the primary sources used in this study have been gathered independently of Soviet controls or biases.

This study is limited to an analysis of the ethnic situation in the USSR as it pertains to the Muslims. Two caveats are in order. First, many of the characteristics of ethnic conflict relevant to the Muslims are directly applicable to other, non-Muslim, Soviet ethnic groups. The differences may be sharpest and the conflict most acute regarding the Muslims, but the situation is not unique. Thus, many of the conclusions in this study about the Muslims are also true for non-Muslim groups. Second, the largest subgroup within the Muslim grouping is that of the Central Asians and this study concentrates on them for that reason. Most, but not all of the observations concerning the Central Asians are true for the Soviet Muslims of the Caucasus, and to a lesser degree, the Volga Muslims. The differences among the Soviet Muslims are examined in Sec. II of this study.

This study was completed in May 1990 and it is based on sources available at that time. The fast pace of events in the USSR can easily make obsolete a study dealing with Soviet ethnic affairs. For that reason, this study aims to understand basic forces acting in favor of change in the USSR by putting the problem in conceptual terms rather than simply describing present trends. It is hoped that such an approach will make this study relevant even five years from now.

II. SOVIET DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

THE SOVIET MUSLIMS AND ETHNICITY

Islam is both a faith and a socio-cultural system. The dichotomy between religion and temporal affairs that has evolved over the centuries in Western Christian thought has not yet developed to a comparable extent in Islam. The interconnectedness, and indeed the inseparability, of political, social, and cultural identities in Islamic thought underpins the belief that Islam transcends ethnic lines and that it refers to a particular cultural orientation and a set of values that is shared by diverse peoples who comprise a supra-state Islamic community of believers. Mosque attendance and regular prayers are a measure of devoutness to the faith, but they do not determine whether an individual considers himself a Muslim, since an institutional infrastructure is not required for a Muslim believer to fulfill the obligations prescribed by the faith. The Muslims' socio-cultural distinctness from non-Muslim ethnic groups is substantial enough that in some multi-ethnic states, such as Yugoslavia, Slavs of Muslim background have been classified as a separate ethnic group; although officially the Soviets do not refer to Muslims in this way, in practice the distinction between the Muslims and the non-Muslim peoples of the USSR is just as clear, and often substantially more so.

Prior to the Russian conquest, religion was not a distinguishing feature to the Muslims who inhabited lands now part of the USSR. Loyalties were primarily local and distinctions were based on towns or villages of origin, tribe, occupation, or Sufi membership.¹ The Russian seizure of the Muslim lands transformed Islam into a major aspect of identity because it became a central cause of the large socio-cultural chasm between the Russians and the Muslims.²

The Soviet regime attempted to alter the Muslims' loyalties by destroying the institutional infrastructure of Islam and by creating new

¹Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "From Tribe to *Umma*," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1985, pp. 15-26.

²Guy Imart, "The Islamic Impact on Traditional Kirghiz Ethnicity," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 14, No. 1-2, Spring-Fall 1986, pp. 65-88; Audrey L. Altstadt, "Azerbaijani Turks' Response to Russian Conquest," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 19, No. 3/4, Autumn/Winter 1986, pp. 267-286; Alexandre A. Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1967.

allegiances.³ The former goal was carried out by closing mosques and by eliminating or co-opting the clergy. The latter goal was carried out through the policy of enlarging the Muslims' polities by severalfold, from a clan-based orientation to identification in terms of newly created ethnic groups. For example, in Central Asia in 1924, as part of the Soviet policy to bring the region under full central control, the single administrative entity of Turkestan was rather arbitrarily divided into four Soviet republics that bore no similarity to the historical administrative units of Turkestan (Kokand, Bukhara, and Khiva). The Soviet creation of Central Asian "nationalities"⁴ began a process of development of ethnic feelings associated with the present ethnic groups.

Ethnic attachments to the "nationalities" created by the Soviets have become real over the course of several generations. The organization of the USSR along ethno-linguistic and ethno-territorial lines provided an administrative structure that stimulated ethnic development along prescribed lines. At the regional level, through purposeful language planning and curbs on movement, the Soviet regime encouraged the growth of inter-Turkic differences. At the individual level, the Soviet system of officially identifying each Soviet citizen by ethnicity (based on parents' ethnicity, and unalterable) and classifying him according to it on all official documents throughout the individual's life reinforced self-identification along the officially recognized ethnic lines.⁵ At the same time, Islamic identity was subsumed into the newly emerged ethnic groups. The Soviets succeeded in reducing the outward manifestations of devoutness among the Soviet Muslims, driving Islamic religiosity underground⁶ and increasing secularization; however, in its specific socio-cultural form, Islam quickly came to underpin the various Soviet Muslim ethnic attachments. Analogous processes to the subsuming of Islamic identity took place in respect to other, supra-ethnic identities. Indeed, Soviet Muslims have a whole range of overlapping identities, for besides an Islamic identity they all share, the main Muslim ethnic groups also share a Turkic identity (except Tajiks) and some of them share a Turkestani identity.

³S. Enders Wimbush, "The Politics of Identity Change in Soviet Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1985, pp. 69-78.

⁴The term "nationality" is inaccurate for it signified the existence and a real awareness of a "nation," whereas no such awareness existed. The term ethnic group is more accurate and neutral in connotation.

⁵This was confirmed in surveys of ex-Soviet residents. See, for example, Rasma Karklins, "Determinants of Ethnic Identification in the USSR: the Soviet Jewish Case," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1987, pp. 27-47.

⁶Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985.

The specific ethnic group allegiances of the Central Asian Muslims are probably not as strong as those of some European Soviet ethnic groups, such as the Lithuanians, because the allegiances are recent, rather artificial, and still diluted by other, higher (supra-ethnic) and lower (tribal) loyalties, but in terms of feelings of distinctness and estrangement, all of the multi-dimensional identities of the Muslims make them a largely alien group within the Soviet polity.

The continued vitality of the major underlying identities (Islamic, Turkic, and Turkestani) has been evident during the ethnic unrest of the past few years. In a multitude of symbolic gestures and practical measures, the independent organizations formed in Muslim regions (including the Volga Muslim region) since Gorbachev's coming to power stress their Muslim roots; they show a distinct, favorable, outward orientation toward other Muslims,⁷ with the strongest links between the Turkic and Turkestani Muslim ethnic groups in a seeming affirmation of pan-Turkic⁸ and Central Asian regional tendencies.⁹ Common cultural roots and shared social, economic, and political problems are not the only reasons for the similar ethnic manifestations; there is a clear recognition of pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic feelings. The continuing recognition of commonality, with its centripetal implications that transcend ethnic divisions (and in the face of over six decades of Soviet anti-Islamic and anti-pan-Turkic measures), is significant in itself.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOVIET MUSLIMS

Because of the underlying shared perceptions of commonality and because of the politically motivated and ethnologically questionable Soviet classification of the Muslims into many "nationalities," the fragmented presentation of the Muslims as divided into dozens of ethnic groups gives a skewed picture of the Muslim strength in the USSR.

⁷For example, the independent organization "Birlik" in Azerbaijan openly recruited other Caucasian Muslims (not necessarily Turkic). See "Impressions of Azerbaijan," *Soviet Nationality Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 9, September 1989, pp. 1-4.

⁸For example, the leader of Azerbaijan's Popular Front, in an interview with a Turkish journalist, said: "We are Turks of Azerbaijan and you are Turks of Anatolia. We always believed that the Turks of Anatolia . . . were right and we loved them in our hearts." Interview with Ebulfezl Aliyev, *Tercuman*, November 23, 1989, translated in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, West Europe*, No. 237, December 12, 1989, pp. 27-28.

⁹For example, a leader of the Uzbeki Popular Front "Birlik" described Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz as culturally the same people, divided artificially by the Soviet regime. Interview with Muhammad Solih, *Soviet Nationality Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 9, September 1989, pp. 4-7.

For example, about one hundred Islamic ethnic groups in the Soviet Union have been identified, with the distinctions often based on minor differences between dialects.¹⁰ Such a detailed picture is useful for a good grasp of the ethnological Soviet population diversity, but it is misleading in comparing the Muslims to the less ethnologically diversified "Europeans" (a product of centuries of assimilatory tendencies).

The distinctness of most of the Muslims as a group from the "Europeans" is evident in their different socio-economic levels, which, in turn, indicates a good deal about functional socio-cultural assimilation of the Muslims in the USSR. Some idea of socio-economic levels can be gauged in general terms by looking at rates of fertility and mobility,¹¹ with low rates of fertility and high rates of mobility (relative to other ethnic groups in the USSR) signifying the influence of modernization—in the form of industrialization and urbanization—and the probable move away from a rural-based, family-oriented life conducive to the perpetuation of traditional Muslim outlooks and attachments. That measure, in conjunction with geographical distinctions, presents a more accurate picture of the Soviet Muslims—their diversity as well as their strength (see Table 1).

Soviet Muslims are by no means a homogeneous grouping. On a scale of socio-economic levels and assumed degrees of assimilation, the Volga Muslims occupy one side and the Central Asian Muslims occupy the other end of the scale, with the Caucasian Muslims in between the center and the Central Asians.

The Central Asian Muslims are the most numerous and the most unassimilated of all the Soviet Muslims. As a general rule, they exhibit extremely high rates of natural increase and very low rates of mobility. Their fertility rates equal or exceed the rates found in the developing countries, and in this regard, Soviet Central Asia can be more aptly compared to Pakistan and Iran rather than to the European USSR. Despite attractive enticements offered by the Soviet regime in an attempt to motivate the Central Asians to move to other regions of the USSR that were short of labor and to relieve the demographic pressures on an already stretched economy in Central Asia, the migration of Central Asian Muslims outside of their region has been remarkably small during the past two decades. Such behavior goes against all established world patterns of migration and it probably reflects cultural impediments, such as the fact that most Muslims grow up in a largely

¹⁰Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, Kegan Paul International, London and Boston, 1983.

¹¹Ronald Wixman, "Ethno-Linguistic Data in Soviet Censuses: Some Problems and Methodologies," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 1983, pp. 545-558.

Table 1
THE SOVIET MUSLIMS

Ethnic Group	Language Group	Population in 1989	Percent of Total USSR
Uzbeks	Turkic	16,686,240	5.84
Kazakhs	Turkic	8,137,878	2.85
Tajiks	Iranian	4,216,693	1.48
Turkmen	Turkic	2,718,297	.95
Kirghiz	Turkic	2,530,998	.89
Karakalpaks	Turkic	423,436	.15
Uigurs	Turkic	262,199	.09
Dungans	Sino-Tibetan	69,686	.02
Total Central Asian Muslims:		35,045,427	12.27
Azeris	Turkic	6,791,106	2.38
Peoples of Dagestan	Caucasic	2,072,071	.73
Avars	Caucasic	(604,202)	(.21)
Lezgins	Caucasic	(466,833)	(.16)
Dargins	Caucasic	(365,797)	(.13)
Kumyks	Turkic	(282,178)	(.10)
Laks	Caucasic	(118,386)	(.04)
Tabasarans	Caucasic	(98,448)	(.03)
Nogays	Turkic	(75,564)	(.03)
Rutuls	Caucasic	(20,672)	(.01)
Tsakhurs	Caucasic	(20,055)	(.01)
Aguls	Caucasic	(19,936)	(.01)
Chechens	Caucasic	958,309	.34
Kabardians	Caucasic	394,651	.14
Ingush	Caucasic	237,577	.08
Karachays	Turkic	156,140	.05
Adygys	Caucasic	124,941	.04
Balkars	Turkic	88,771	.03
Circassians	Caucasic	52,356	.02
Abazins	Caucasic	33,801	.01
Total Caucasian Muslims:		10,909,723	3.82
(Volga) Tatars	Turkic	6,645,588	2.33
Bashkirs	Turkic	1,449,462	.51
Total Volga Muslims:		8,095,050	2.83
Crimean Tatars	Turkic	268,739	.09
Meskhetian Turks	Turkic	207,369	.07
Kurds	Iranian	152,952	.05
Persians	Iranian	40,510	.01
Baluchis	Iranian	29,091	.01
Total "Other" Muslims:		698,661	.24
Total Soviet Muslims in 1989:		54,748,861	19.16
Total Russians in 1989:		145,071,550	50.78
Total Eastern Slavs in 1989:		199,237,980	69.74
Total Population of USSR in 1989:		285,688,965	

SOURCE: *Natsionalnyi Sostav Naseleniya, Chast II, Informatsionno-izdatelsky Tsentr, Moscow, 1989, pp. 3-5, as given in Ann Sheehy, "Ethnic Muslims Account for Half of Soviet Population Increases," Report on the USSR, Vol. 2, No. 3, January 19, 1990, pp. 15-18.*

insular environment, where strong attachments to the family and cultural-religious pressures act against movement out of their culturally homogeneous area. Migration trends are slowly changing and fertility rates declined between 1976–1986 (before slowly climbing again), but the changes are yet to be felt to any substantial extent and their impact will not be major until after the year 2000.

All of the large Central Asian ethnic groups are Turkic, with the exception of Tajiks, whose language is Iranian but who in all other respects are much like the other Central Asian ethnic groups. For administrative reasons—based on economic regions of the USSR—the Soviets refer to Kazakhstan as separate from Central Asia. The distinction has some merit to it on historical grounds (due to patterns of Russian expansionism), and the Kazakhs are, in a sense, a transitional group between the Muslims of Turkestan and those of the middle Volga. However, in the past few decades, the Kazakhs' socio-economic indicators have been similar to those of the Turkestani Muslims.

Caucasian Muslims include ethnic groups of Turkic and Caucasian linguistic stock. Although significant socio-cultural differences exist among the Muslim ethnic groups of the Caucasus, the main patterns of the Caucasian Muslims include moderate to high rates of natural increase and very low to low levels of mobility. The Azeris and the eastern North Caucasians seem less functionally assimilated than the western North Caucasians. The Azeris have close ethnic kinsmen in Turkey and northern Iran, and, in terms of Soviet ethnic groups, they are quite close to the Turkic Central Asians. Azeris have Shiite roots, in contrast to the Sunni background of most of the other Soviet Muslims; however, the Sunni/Shiite divisions ceased to be of major importance when the Muslims were confronted with non-Muslim Russians.

The Muslims of the middle Volga consist of two Turkic ethnic groups: Tatars and Bashkirs. They are characterized by low to moderate rates of natural increase and moderate to high rates of mobility. The Tatars are fairly well assimilated economically in the USSR; in fact, only a minority of Tatars live within the bounds of Tatar ASSR. The Volga Muslims' socio-cultural and economic indicators differ radically from those of Central Asians.

A few other, minor Muslim ethnic groups do not fit easily into the general geographic-ethnic milieus. Some, like the Crimean Tatars and the Meskhetian Turks, were forcefully resettled and scattered during Stalin's rule. Many of the small, scattered groups have origins in neighboring Middle Eastern countries: Kurds, Persians, Baluchis, and Meskhetian Turks. Even smaller groups of Muslims constitute minorities within ethnic groups associated with other religious-cultural

backgrounds: Adzhars (Muslim Georgians), Ossetians, Tats, Abkhazis, and Udis.

THE RENEWED ROLE OF RELIGION

The increase in open demonstrations of adherence to Islam in the USSR was noticeable in the early eighties,¹² and subsequently it has been confirmed by Soviet sociological surveys published in the Gorbachev wave of liberalization. Religious feelings are widespread in rural and urban areas and interest in religion is spreading, especially among the youth.¹³

Rather than a religious revival, the renewed open role of religion is an indication of the latter's survival and persistence. As the strong central controls over the Muslim areas weakened in the seventies, the institutions previously driven underground began to reemerge into the open, and the liberalization under Gorbachev opened the floodgates.

The strong link between religion and ethnicity was probably responsible for the increased Islamic and ethnic awareness in the seventies and eighties. Since an Uzbek cannot consider himself an Uzbek without observing certain Muslim rituals, the lesser secularization in Islam than in Christianity gives the Soviet Muslims' cultural practices greater religious flavor. Even in the seventies, the adherence to main Muslim rites had been nearly universal in Central Asia and substantial in other Soviet Muslim areas.¹⁴ Despite official ridiculing of such customs, and in face of stiff penalties, observance of these practices was widespread even among communist party members.¹⁵ Since popular demonstrations removed the regime-serving chief mufti of the Central

¹²Alexandre Bennigsen, "Islam in Retrospect," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1989, pp. 89-109.

¹³*Slovo Lektora*, January 1989; *Nauka i Religiya*, No. 1, 1990; Paul Goble, "Soviet Myths About Religion Crumble," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 10, March 9, 1990, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴Ewa Chylinski, "Supranational and Subnational Rituals and Symbols in Soviet Central Asia," *Nordic Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, pp. 21-35.

¹⁵For the past two decades, until the relaxation of anti-Islamic policies in 1988-1989, the Soviet press in Central Asia carried numerous reports of party members expelled for religious practices. In 1988, *oblast* party leaders in Kirghizia were said to be participating in religious rites [*Sovetskii Kirgizstan*, June 23, 1988, translated in *Joint Publications Research Service, Soviet Union, Political Affairs (JPRS-UPA from hereon)*, No. 38, September 8, 1988, p. 12]. The growing strength of Islam in Central Asia in the seventies was also corroborated through surveys of ex-residents [Rasma Karklins, "Islam: How Strong Is It in the Soviet Union? Inquiry Based on Oral Interviews with Soviet Germans Repatriated from Central Asia in 1979," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January-March 1980, pp. 65-81].

Asian Muslims in February 1989, there has been a pronounced turn toward freedom of worship in Muslim regions. Until that time, religious liberalization under Gorbachev was largely limited to Soviet territories with a Christian heritage. The greater tolerance of Islam, promised in the second half of 1989,¹⁶ has been realized. An official Islam role in Soviet Muslim areas has reemerged, with mosques reopening, Koran excerpts printed in local media, pilgrimages facilitated to Mecca, and so forth. The practical effect of Islam's open role will be to accentuate the already deep divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims in the USSR and to further strengthen pan-Islamic bonds. The open interest in religion also has had specific consequences for the military. In 1987-1988, there were increasing numbers of young Muslims refusing to serve in the military for strictly religious reasons;¹⁷ their numbers are likely to grow.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE SOVIET MILITARY

The high fertility rates among the Soviet Muslims, and especially the Central Asians, have profound consequences for the ethnic makeup of the Soviet society. The racial and ethnic changes should not be exaggerated, for demographic shifts are slow and gradual. If the USSR survives as a single state, current projections show that Russians will remain by far the largest Soviet ethnic group for the foreseeable time to come, probably constituting over 35 percent of the Soviet population in the year 2050.

Nevertheless, a disproportionate share of the Soviet population growth will come from the Muslims. Results of the 1989 census show that Muslims were responsible for virtually half of the Soviet population increase between 1979-1989. Even given expected declines in fertility based on patterns common to developing countries, by 2010 about half of Soviet population growth will be due to the Central Asians alone. By 2050, this ratio will climb to two thirds.¹⁸ While the

¹⁶Interview with Mufti Mukhammad-Sadyk Mukhammad-Yusof, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, September 13, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 60, November 15, 1989, pp. 85-88.

¹⁷Comments by First Party Secretary of Tajikistan, Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, February 6, 1988, translated in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, Soviet Union (FBIS-SOV from hereon)*, No. 28, February 11, 1988, p. 76; "Central Asian Draftees Stimulate Inter-ethnic Army Policy," *Soviet Muslims Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1988, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸W. Ward Kingkade, *USSR: Estimates and Projections of the Population, by Major Nationality, 1979 to 2050*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Center for International Research, Staff Paper No. 41, May 1988; W. Ward Kingkade, "Recent and Prospective Population Growth in the U.S.S.R.: 1979-2025," *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 29, No. 4, April 1988, pp. 394-412.

difference between Russians and the Central Asians in natural growth rates is very large, the Muslims are still a distinct minority, amounting to 19.2 percent, or about one-fifth of the total Soviet population.

In terms of demographic trends of most concern to the Soviet military, the second echo of the Soviet population losses during World War II bottomed out in 1987–1988. Future effects of previous demographic catastrophes will be minor and a steady increase in the number of 18-year-old males is projected to continue past the year 2000; thus, regardless of international trends, the manpower crunch—in terms of numbers—faced by the Soviet military for most of the eighties has ceased to be a worry.

Instead, the ethnic composition of the Soviet conscript pool, an area of increasing Soviet concern since the late sixties, has become the primary problem. Because of the rapid population growth among the Soviet Muslims and the slow growth among the Russians and Slavs in general, the share of Muslims in the conscript pool has been much greater than their relative weight in the Soviet population as a whole. The graying of the “Europeans” has been accompanied by the youthful trend among the Muslims, a trend that will change even further in the nineties.¹⁹ If the USSR retains conscription, the Muslims will form an increasing component of the combat branches of the Soviet armed forces. The ground forces will be most affected, and the Muslims as a group may come close to being the majority of conscripts in that branch of service.²⁰ The current policy of retaining conscription combined with easy deferments for students will only further increase the ratio of Muslims to Slavs in the Soviet military because of proportionally higher educational attainment levels among the Slavs. Thus, while the numerical problem has ceased to worry the Soviet military, the potentially more threatening problem of ethnic composition of the Soviet armed forces and the host of difficulties associated with it has become paramount.

¹⁹Steven Popper, *The Economic Cost of Soviet Military Manpower Requirements*, The RAND Corporation, R-3659-AF, March 1989; Edmund Brunner, Jr., “Soviet Demographic Trends and the Ethnic Composition of Draft Age Males, 1980–1995,” in Alexander R. Alexiev and S. Enders Wimbush (ed.), *Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1988, pp. 197–236; Paul E. Lydolph, “Recent Population Characteristics and Growth in the USSR,” *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 10, December 1989, pp. 711–729; Richard H. Rowland, “National and Regional Population Trends in the USSR, 1979–1989: Preliminary Results from the 1989 Census,” *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 9, November 1989, pp. 635–669.

²⁰Soviet sources reveal that as of early 1989, about a third of the personnel of the Army and Navy was from the Caucasus or Central Asia; *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 5, March 1989, translated in *Joint Publications Research Service, Soviet Union, Military Affairs (JPRS-UMA from hereon)*, No. 11, May 15, 1989, pp. 27–33. This figure rose to the vicinity of 40 percent by 1990.

Central Asian, Kazakh, Transcaucasian, and Dagestani Muslims are some of the most unassimilated ethnic groups in the USSR. Their religious and socio-cultural attachment to Islam is substantial and growing. Their sense of distinctness and separateness from the Slavs is large and multi-dimensional. They also pose the greatest danger to the cohesion of the Soviet armed forces; thus, most of the observations in this study pertain to these ethnic groups. However, in view of the Islamic revival in the USSR and the increased ethnic reawakening, the militancy of the least assimilated Muslim ethnic groups has the potential of sparking similar trends among the more assimilated Soviet Muslim ethnic groups, such as the Muslims of western North Caucasus, the Bashkirs, and the Tatars. In this sense, Islam is an important bond between some diverse ethnic groups. For that reason, the conclusions in this study pertain to Soviet Muslims as a whole.

III. ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE SOVIET UNION

A military does not exist in a vacuum and an accurate assessment of a minority group in a military organization has to examine the group in terms of "the societal context within which the interaction between the group and the military organization operates."¹ This is especially true of a conscript, mass military force, where the societal cleavages are mirrored, if not accentuated. The nature of the ethnic conflict in the USSR provides the key to an appraisal of the impact that an increasing proportion of Muslims will have on the Soviet military.

DEFINING ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is a way of categorizing human beings. It is a concept based on a myth of collective ancestry that gives an innate character to the traits believed to be fundamental to the particular ethnic group. The belief in an ascriptive notion of these traits leads to a feeling of affinity between members of an ethnic group, and the myth of collective ancestry makes the ethnic group psychologically the largest extension of the family.² Ethnicity is usually associated with race, religion, or language but it also includes culturally induced group patterns of values, social customs, perceptions, behavioral roles, language use, and roles of social interaction shared by group members.³ These patterns are learned and internalized at an early age. Children have an ethnic awareness by the time they are three to four years old, and their ethnic orientation is consolidated by the age of eight.⁴ Secondary characteristics of ethnicity are reversible, but the traits perceived to be ascriptive are very difficult to unlearn.

Among the main characteristics used to distinguish ethnicity (race, religion, and language), racially distinguishing physical features cannot

¹C. C. Moskos, "Minority Groups in Military Organizations," in R. W. Little (ed.), *Handbook of Military Institutions*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1971, p. 286.

²Ronald A. Remnick, *Theory of Ethnicity: An Anthropologist's Perspective*, University Press of America, New York and London, 1983, p. 2; Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1985, p. 50.

³Mary Jane Rotheram and Jean S. Phinney, "Introduction: Definitions and Perspectives in the Study of Children's Ethnic Socialization," in Jean S. Phinney and Mary Jane Rotheram (ed.), *Children's Ethnic Socialization; Pluralism and Development*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1987, p. 11.

⁴Rotheram and Phinney, "Introduction: Definitions and Perspectives," p. 15.

be altered. In the modern Western view, religion is voluntary; it is chosen freely by an individual. Such a view of religion (still a relatively new notion, dating back to the Enlightenment) is not shared in non-Western societies where religion remains an ascriptive affiliation. A similar phenomenon relates to language. In ethnically divided societies, a language that a child learns first almost always determines his ethnic identification.⁵ In effect, religion and language are ascriptive (similar to race) and coterminous with ethnicity in much of the non-Western world.

ETHNIC CONFLICT: THE SOVIET CASE

Social scientists generally agree on a few basic characteristics common to all cases of ethnic conflict. The pattern of ethnic conflict repeated in numerous diverse countries offers clear lessons for the Soviet case, for there is no reason to believe that Soviet Muslim areas do not fit these general patterns of human group behavior. Indeed, there are many similarities and obvious parallels between Soviet Muslim republics and the developing, multi-ethnic states that have been rocked by divisive ethnic conflict.

Ascriptive Understanding of Ethnicity

Soviet Central Asia is a developing (or at best a semi-developed), non-Western region with a social structure that is highly conducive to the survival and perpetuation of traditional outlooks. Besides some basic socio-economic indicators of the level of development (fertility and mobility, discussed in Sec. II), a wide range of data, such as infant mortality rates and levels of health care, indicate that Soviet Central Asia is ahead of, but comparable with, some neighboring developing Asian countries. Central Asian Muslims are overwhelmingly rural; the lack of services is most acute in the countryside, but non-elite urban Muslims do not fare much better. Rapid rates of population increase, combined with insufficient investment in health and housing, cultural proclivities (Central Asian Muslims put a premium on having a house), and physical limits to growth in Central Asia have led to overcrowding. Soviet statistical data on housing,⁶ as well as Soviet descriptions of the Ferghana valley, point to overcrowded living conditions.

⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 50.

⁶Kazimierz J. Zaniewski, "Housing Inequalities Under Socialism: A Geographic Perspective," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 22, No. 4, Winter 1989, pp. 291-306.

The combination of a relatively low level of development and a primarily rural population in Muslim-inhabited Soviet areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus suggests that the family, traditionally the central focus of loyalty for a Muslim, remains of considerable importance for identity and a vehicle for social advancement. Traditional ethnic notions can be expected to survive in this type of a non-Western society: the concept of kinship permeates the Central Asian Muslims' understanding of ethnicity, religion is seen as ascriptive, and language forms an important aspect of self-identity.

Lessons from other multi-ethnic states rocked by ethnic conflict show a correlation between the level of development and the type of violence that occurs. Whereas ethnically motivated violence in the developed countries takes the form of terrorist acts (the Basque region and Catalonia in Spain, various separatist groups in France, South Tyrol secessionists in Italy, Catholics in Northern Ireland, etc.), in the developing countries, the violence usually takes the form of massive riots and pogroms directed against the persons and property of another ethnic group and it is usually marked by a high degree of cruelty and instances of mutilations⁷ (there have been numerous examples in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America). The main reason for the special intensity of inter-ethnic violence in the developing countries stems from the concept of kinship underlying ethnicity, the crucial importance of the family for an individual (because the fragmenting of familial ties as a result of industrialization and the idea of institutions impartial to one's ethnic or family background are weak or nonexistent in such societies and an individual relies on his family for self-identity and often for very survival), and the belief in the ascriptive nature of ethnic traits that results in the fanatical attachment of individuals to their ethnic groups. Thus, parallels with other countries indicate that ethnically motivated violence in Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus can be expected to continue to be manifested in massive riots and pogroms.

Ethnic Rankings

The USSR, a successor state to the Russian Empire, has always been dominated by its largest ethnic group, the Russians. The Russians' superior status has been visible in all spheres of life—note, for example, the uniquely superior position of the Russian language over all other languages spoken in the USSR. The Soviet administrative system set up a hierarchy of ethnic groups by giving some groups

⁷Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 20.

republic status, others autonomous region (*oblast*) status, and still others only an autonomous homeland (*kray*) or district (*okrug*), or no ethno-territorial entity at all. The realm of self-governance for an ethnic group decreases at each downward administrative step because the political infrastructure becomes correspondingly smaller. Thus, in the Soviet system, the Russians have by far the highest status; the Russian republic is the only federated republic in the USSR. Until 1989, there was not even a Russian communist party; instead, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was also the Russian party. The Russians are followed in status rankings by the ethnic groups having republic status. Then come the ethnic groups with autonomous region status, and so on. At each downward step, pressures for assimilation grow,⁸ and assimilatory policies become stronger.⁹ The reforms launched under the Gorbachev leadership have led to virtually every Soviet ethnic group extending demands for higher administrative status—groups not having an ethno-administrative status demand one,¹⁰ *kray* groups demand *oblast* status, *oblast* groups demand republic status, and ethnic groups with a republic status demand a looser federal structure or outright secession.¹¹

The domination of the USSR by the Russians and the superior status of the Russians vis-à-vis all other ethnic groups had been affirmed through a whole range of Soviet policies. Underlying all these policies was the concept of the "merging of nations." This concept, adhered to until recently by the Soviet regime with varying intensity since Stalin's early years in power (Gorbachev finally officially repudiated the goal of "merging of nations" in January 1989), had the goal of integrating the various Soviet ethnic groups and creating a Soviet "nationality" that in fact would differ little from the Russian "nationality." The Soviet regime used specific social, economic, and cultural policies to bring about its assimilatory and integrationist aims.

⁸Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity Among Non-Russians in the USSR," *Demography*, Vol. 20, No. 4, November 1983, pp. 461-489; Seppo Lallukka, "Changing Age-Sex Composition as an Indication of Ethnic Reidentification: The Mordvins," *Nordic Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1987, pp. 35-55.

⁹Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Equality, Efficiency, and Politics in Soviet Bilingual Education Policy, 1934-1980," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4, December 1984, pp. 1019-1039.

¹⁰This includes ethnic groups that never had such a region as well as those whose autonomous regions were dissolved under Stalin, such as the Germans, Poles, Greeks, Koreans, and others.

¹¹For an articulate statement by three intellectuals for real sovereignty for Kazakhstan, see *Qazaq Adebieti*, October 27, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 2, January 11, 1990, pp. 37-39.

Soviet atheistic policies, and the ridicule of Islam in particular, had an ethnic status-affirming dimension because of the Soviet Muslims' ascriptive view of religion and the strong connection between Islam and ethnicity. In terms of language policy, the imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet upon the Central Asians' written languages and the massive infusion of Russianisms into those languages were accompanied by an official policy that emphasized the use of Russian at the expense of non-Russian languages. In both respects, Soviet policies seemed to deny and denigrate the Muslims' basic ethnic identities.

Soviet language policy is an especially good example of the denigration of non-Russian languages. A component of the Soviet "nationalities" policy, the Soviet language policy underwent some major changes, but its ultimate goal—the displacement of languages other than Russian—remained until the mid-eighties.¹² In practical terms, the Soviet language policy caused a series of changes in the Muslim languages. Initially, in the twenties, the Arabic scripts of the Muslims' languages were replaced by the Latin alphabet as part of the effort to modernize and integrate the outlying areas of the USSR. By 1940, in the entire USSR, only Georgian, Armenian, and the languages of the newly acquired Baltic republics did not use the Cyrillic alphabet. All other languages of the USSR were given the Cyrillic script, modified in minor ways to take into account local differences.

There was extensive Russification of all Soviet languages. Soviet Turkic languages still show traces of this policy, with virtually all neologisms coming from Russian. Massive borrowings of words from Russian and grammatical changes in other languages to comply with Russian syntax greatly altered some of the smaller ethnic groups' languages.¹³ The languages of ethnic groups that had close linguistic kin in other countries were especially affected by the Russifying directives in an undisguised attempt to isolate and estrange the groups in the USSR from potential influences from abroad. The Tajiks were the Muslim group most affected, although the Azeris also suffered a great deal from the language policies.¹⁴ In a few extreme cases of Soviet

¹²For an overview of Soviet language policy as it affected the various ethnic groups, see Isabelle T. Kreindler (ed.), *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages: Their Past, Present and Future*, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, Amsterdam, and Berlin, 1985.

¹³For example, regarding changes in Avar, the main language of Dagestan, see Simon Crisp, "Language Planning and the Orthography of Avar," *Folia Slavica*, Vol. 7, No. 1-2, 1984, pp. 91-104.

¹⁴Jonathan Pool, "Developing the Soviet Turkic Tongues: The Language of the Politics of Language," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 1976, pp. 425-442; Rory Allardyce, "Planned Bilingualism: The Soviet Case," *Journal of Russian Studies*, No. 52, 1987, p. 10.

social engineering gone out of control, the languages of some small ethnic groups were so full of Russianisms that they were virtually unintelligible to the populations that were supposed to speak them.¹⁵

Such politically inspired excesses, rationalized by the pseudo-scientific theories of Nikolai Marr, the Lysenko of Soviet linguistics, came to an end in the early fifties. A reaction against the Stalinist policies took place during the more relaxed atmosphere of the early part of Khrushchev's tenure.¹⁶ In another twist in policy, from the late fifties until the advent of *perestroika*, Soviet language policy reverted to Russifying trends;¹⁷ although it was more subtle, it avoided the Stalinist excesses, and the idea of bringing about changes in a short period of time was discarded.

The obvious chauvinistic glorification of the Russian language and the colonial-like, paternalistic treatment of other languages of the USSR had been a noticeable part of Soviet language policy since the late twenties and they were jarringly visible until the mid and late eighties.

In the cultural sphere, the Soviet regime for years had banned or distorted Turkic artistic works in an attempt to prevent the spread of negative images as part of the official propaganda line of portraying relations between ethnic groups in the USSR only as friendly.¹⁸ The ideologically based division of Muslim cultural figures into progressives and reactionaries resulted in similar distortions of Muslim achievements. In the realm of education, Soviet historiography interpreted the past from European-centered and, more specifically, Russian-centered, points of view. Consequently, the Russian conquest of the territories inhabited by the Turkic peoples was presented as a largely harmonious Russian mission to civilize the "backward" and "primitive" Turkic peoples, while little mention was made of the fact that Central

¹⁵Paul M. Austin, "Soviet Finnish: The End of a Dream," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1987, pp. 183-205.

¹⁶Michael Bruchis, "The Language Policy of the CPSU and the Linguistic Situation in Soviet Moldavia," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1984, pp. 108-126.

¹⁷For some good examples, see George A. Perfecky, "The Status of the Ukrainian Language in the Ukrainian SSR," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1987, pp. 207-230; Michael Bruchis, "The Politics of Language in Soviet Moldavia, 1951-55," *Slavic and Soviet Series*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall 1978, pp. 3-26.

¹⁸Some of the classical art of the Turkic peoples in the USSR is implicitly or explicitly anti-Russian; the best known case is the classic Turkic *dastan* (a form of literary oral history) *Chora Batir*, which names Russians as the eternal enemies of the Central Asian Turks and warns against the perils of intermarriage with them. See H. B. Paksoy, "Chora Batir: A Tatar Admonition to Future Generations," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 19, No. 3-4, Autumn/Winter 1986, pp. 273-265. For another case, see Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, "Idegey Joins the Family of Rehabilitated Turkic National Epics," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 39, September 29, 1989, pp. 23-24.

Asia once had been one of the commercial and intellectual centers of the Islamic world.¹⁹ In a particularly emotional area, children's education, Soviet policies often had a crude and belittling slant against the non-Russian ethnic groups that was openly apparent to Muslims. For example, in an extreme case, elementary school teachers were advised to identify the physical features of positive role models with those of Russians, whereas the physical attributes common to Muslims were associated with negative characters.²⁰

Virtually all Soviet policies had an ethnic dimension. Common to Soviet policies was the contrast between the status of the Russians and that of other ethnic groups. The pro-Russian thrust was due to a natural inclination of any state to control centrifugal tendencies, as well as specifically Soviet ideologically motivated social engineering and Russian chauvinism. However, to non-Russians, and especially the Muslims, who viewed the Soviet policies from an ethnic perspective, the Russian chauvinist features predominated. Consequently, the Soviet policies had a pervasive, ethnic status-affirming dimension that could only spark resentment on the part of non-Russians, and Muslims in particular. Details, such as the opening line of the Uzbek national hymn that says "Greetings to the Russian people, our elder brothers," the lack of street signs in local languages (only in Russian) in the capital cities of Central Asia, or even the fact that post offices in Uzbekistan would not accept telegrams in Uzbek but only in Russian, when multiplied hundredfold, must have begun to appear burdensome and belittling.

A side effect of the Soviet policies and the clear differences in status was the strengthening of distrust of Soviet institutions by non-Russians. The distrust probably began to be learned at a young age, for there was a clear dissonance between the crude, formal indoctrination in school and the socialization processes that children underwent at home; there were inherent contradictions related to children's everyday observance of ethnic diversity although the official Soviet line emphasized uniformity and the convergence of other ethnic groups toward the Russians.²¹ The family plays the most important role in a child's socialization process—particularly in developing, rural regions

¹⁹Presumably, this will soon change, as books presenting more truthful versions of history are published under Gorbachev. The falsifying trends in history continued into the mid-eighties. See Jacob M. Landau, "Some Russian Works on Soviet Muslims," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, January 1990, pp. 119-123.

²⁰Isabelle Kreindler, "Teaching Russian Esthetics to the Kirghiz," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 40, No. 3, July 1981, pp. 333-338.

²¹J. J. Tomiak (ed.), *Soviet Education in the 1980s*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983.

where most Muslims live—so the huge gap between what children learned at school and what they learned at home probably led to an internalization of estrangement from Soviet institutions at an early age.

It is generally agreed that serious ethnic conflict has origins in clear differences in status between ethnic groups. Whether due to discriminatory policies or regional variation, some ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic state are bound to benefit more than others from industrialization and increased opportunities in education and non-agricultural employment, with the consequent differences in the status of some ethnic groups being perceived as backward (and usually not well represented in politically influential positions) and others as advanced (and usually overrepresented among the elite). The Soviet case is an example of strong, across-the-board differences in status (economically, politically, culturally, and linguistically) between the many ethnic groups in the USSR, with the Russians at the top of the hierarchy and the Muslims at or near the bottom. Moreover, the status differences in the USSR stem from clearly discriminatory policies.

Ethnic Mobilization

By itself, differences in status based on ethnicity do not have to lead to ethnic conflict, but they are a prerequisite for it (in both developed and developing countries). The differences in status become a cause of serious inter-ethnic conflict when an ethnic group becomes mobilized and makes ethnic differences a political issue. In this sense, an ethnic movement is ethnicity that has turned militant.²²

Causes of mobilization lie in the realm of psychology, for they are rooted in every individual's need for a positive image of self-worth, a need that is satisfied by belonging to social units regarded as worthy. An ethnic group acts as a vehicle of collective social recognition through which an individual's self-worth is affirmed.²³ In developing states torn by ethnic conflict, an ethnic group's social standing is not determined in any absolute manner but by its relation to other ethnic groups in the state, and attempts to change an ethnic group's social standing revolve primarily around competition with other ethnic groups. In this sense, inter-ethnic conflict is a zero-sum game, where any gains for one group must come at the expense of another group. Ethnic conflict develops a dynamic of its own and, especially in

²²Christina Bratt Paulston, "Understanding Educational Policies in Multilingual States," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 508, March 1990, pp. 38-47.

²³Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 185.

developing regions where ethnic traits are perceived to be ascriptive, it becomes a lifelong competition that assumes an unparalleled centrality and urgency for individuals who identify themselves in terms of their ethnicity.

Putting the process of mobilization in conceptual terms, the elite mobilizes the masses of a backward ethnic group by calling attention to the masses' backward status and demanding from the central government compensatory measures designed to offset the superior position of another, relatively advanced ethnic group. The mass sentiment to which the elites appeal is rooted in the psychological dimension, although the specific motives for the elites' mobilizational appeals to the masses are usually related to economic causes.²⁴ A cycle of increasingly divisive inter-ethnic conflict begins as ethnic allegiances start to assume a permeative character, affecting the functioning of organizations unrelated to ethnic matters and giving ethnic conflict a pervasive quality.²⁵ Economic, ecological, social, educational, and all kinds of other issues that would normally not incite ethnic feelings begin to be viewed from ethnically based perspectives, making the resolution of such issues more difficult and fueling further escalation of ethnic tensions. The struggle becomes one for status. All types of symbolic and often minor issues, such as the right to wear symbolically significant garments (such as headgear), become central issues in the conflict. Language has no equal as a symbol of dominance, and demands for a single, official language in a multi-ethnic state amount to a demand for the codification of preeminence for one ethnic group. The economic sphere usually becomes the chief area of conflict because positions of economic power, besides bestowing status in their own right, have implications for the distribution of resources and thus have consequences on a whole range of other issues.

Although the conflict is waged in a whole variety of foci (economic, linguistic, educational), "the issue at bottom is predicated upon distinct group-identities and the question of the right of one of these people to rule the other."²⁶ The conflict is a quest for dominance because that is where group status and social psychology meet. Since ethnic group status is relative, ethnic groups "derive prestige and self-respect from the harmony between their norms and those which achieve dominance

²⁴Albert Breton, "The Economics of Nationalism," *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 72, No. 4, August 1964, pp. 376-386.

²⁵Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 7-8.

²⁶Walker Connor, "Eco- or ethno-nationalism?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, July 1984, p. 350.

in the society."²⁷ Put in a different way, the conflict becomes a struggle for power as an end with the ability to distribute prestige as the object of conflict.

The conflict also evolves overtly. From initial demands for equality, as the sides become polarized, priority and then exclusivity become the goals of the backward ethnic group. The final exclusivist aim is homogeneity, and destruction of the evidence of diversity and forced expulsions of other ethnic groups—common aspects of an advanced stage of ethnic conflict—may be employed to achieve it.

Differences in the status of Russians and Muslims have existed ever since the Russian conquest of the areas inhabited by the Muslims. During the Stalinist period, all signs of resistance to the differences in status were eliminated brutally. However, the lessening role of terror as a means of governing the country led in the seventies to an increasing and overt politicization of status differences based on ethnicity. In addition, increased communication among the various Soviet Muslim ethnic groups made the Muslims more aware of their collective inferior status vis-à-vis the Russians. Ironically, the Soviet policy of "nativization"—the creation of a professional cadre in each ethnic group—launched the seeds of ethnic reassertiveness among the Muslims by providing trained, skilled personnel to staff influential posts. The creation of a supposedly politically reliable, secular, local Muslim elite was a cornerstone of the Soviet regime's integrationist program to diminish the threat to the cohesiveness of the Soviet state. However, the policy backfired.²⁸

Specifically, demographic pressures, combined with the economic slowdown in the late seventies, led to the mobilization of Muslims against the ethnically based status distinctions. The rapid rise in population began to outstrip the infrastructure capable of supporting the population in Central Asia; living standards began to drop in the seventies and continued their slide in the eighties. For example, infant mortality rates in Uzbekistan rose from 31 per thousand in 1970 to almost 50 per thousand by the late eighties. Access to higher education became more difficult. By the late eighties, some 1,000,000 people were unemployed in Uzbekistan alone.²⁹

In response to the demographic and economic pressures, the local elites in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus became increasingly assertive and instituted an across-the-board policy of

²⁷Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 217.

²⁸Steven L. Burg, "Muslim Cadres and Soviet Political Development: Reflections from a Comparative Perspective," *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1, October 1984, pp. 24-47.

²⁹"Konferentsiya v Tashkente," *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 3, 1989, p. 216.

preferential treatment based on ethnicity that went far beyond what the Soviet regime had intended.³⁰ Demands for compensatory and preferential measures are a sure sign of a mobilized ethnic group and the fact that Central Asian elites at all levels pursued highly exclusionary policies along ethnic lines is a sign of inter-ethnic rivalry, widely shared awareness of status differences between ethnic groups, and the mass nature of the ethnic mobilization.

By the late seventies, ethnic conflict in many regions of the USSR (Baltics, Caucasus, Central Asia) had reached an overtly permeative character, although discussions of its manifestations were kept in check through strict censorship. A sign of the ethnic tensions in Muslim areas was the controversy over preferential access to education based on ethnicity.³¹ Several riots and demonstrations took place over this issue in the Caucasus and in Central Asia in the late seventies, and surveys of ex-residents from those areas have confirmed the high intensity of ethnic feelings on this topic.³² Prior to Gorbachev, ethnic discontent could be expressed only in disguised terms by the elites (with the intellectual elite the most visible)³³ although wide strata of the Muslim population seemed susceptible to ethnic appeals and discontent was by no means limited to the elites. Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms stripped of any validity the official pretense that ethnic problems did not exist, and *glasnost*-age media discussions of the ethnic problem emboldened ethnic nationalists to openly press their demands. For example, the cancelled Siberian river diversion scheme was greeted by the Central Asians as a case of Russian refusal to allow sustained future economic growth of the region.³⁴ The various ecological disasters in the area that were a product of blind industrialization and inadequate attention to environmental impact were linked to an exploitative Russian policy.³⁵ The causes of large-scale unemployment

³⁰Nancy Lubin, *Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise*, Macmillan/St. Anthony's, London, 1984; pp. 154-164.

³¹Rasma Karklins, "Ethnic Politics and Access to Higher Education: The Soviet Case," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, April 1984, pp. 277-294.

³²Rasma Karklins, "Nationality Power in Soviet Republics: Attitudes and Perceptions," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 70-93.

³³William Fierman, "Cultural Nationalism in Soviet Uzbekistan: A Case Study of the *Immortal Cliffs*," *Soviet Union*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1985, pp. 1-41; William Fierman, "Uzbek Feelings of Ethnicity: A Study of Attitudes Expressed in Recent Uzbek Literature," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, Vol. 22, No. 2-3, April-September 1981, pp. 187-229.

³⁴Rusi Nasar, "Reflections on the Aral Sea Tragedy in the National Literature of Turkistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1989, pp. 49-68.

³⁵For a specific example that links radioactive waste in Uzbekistan with Moscow area factories, see James Critchlow, "Uzbek Writer on Threat Posed by Radioactive Waste," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 10, March 9, 1990, pp. 19-20. For a USSR-wide over-

and the dependency of the region's agriculture on one crop were portrayed in ethnic terms. Such discussions represent, at bottom, the opposition to central ministries' control (and mismanagement) over economic decisionmaking in an ethnically distinct region.

The status of indigenous languages has become probably the most explosive and hotly debated issue in the non-Russian ethnically based administrative units of the USSR, and the Muslim areas are no exception.³⁶ A whole range of problems related to language has surfaced along with a tremendous amount of accumulated resentment that is now being expressed openly without much worry about personal safety. Examples of the ludicrous nature of some of the forced use of Russian are numerous. In one case, a journalist from Karakalpak ASSR wrote of meetings on state farms where, despite not even one Russian speaker, an interpreter translated the proceedings into Russian.³⁷

The presence of Soviet military installations also has come under increasing criticism, and, just as in the Baltic republics, spokesmen for independent Central Asian organizations have begun to refer openly to the Soviet military as an occupation force. The Soviet nuclear testing site at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan is subject to organized pressure to stop its activity; the protests against the facility have a strong ethnic sentiment.

The quick assumption of an ethnic dimension by virtually any grievance in the USSR is a natural evolutionary step in all cases of severe ethnic conflict. In the Soviet case, the spreading of ethnic conflict was made easier because of ethnic structuralism as the organizing principle for the administrative division of the USSR.³⁸

It is fairly evident that the Soviet Muslims (as well as many other Soviet ethnic groups) are ethnically mobilized. There has always been a significant measure of opposition to Russian (and Soviet) rule in Muslim areas, but the opposition was unfocused and all evidence of it was suppressed brutally during Stalin's rule. The mobilization that took place gradually in the seventies and eighties sharpened the opposition organizationally. Gorbachev's liberalization allowed the ethnic

view of this phenomenon, see "Panel on Nationalism in the USSR: Environmental and Territorial Aspects," *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 6, June 1989, pp. 441-509, especially pp. 471-484.

³⁶For language legislation passed by each Soviet republic, see "Republic Language Legislation," *JPRS-UPA*, No. 63, December 5, 1989.

³⁷Letter to the editor from I. Taumuratov, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, September 13, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 60, November 15, 1989, p. 61.

³⁸For an interesting discussion of this aspect in a comparative perspective, see Paul B. Henze, "The Spectre and Implications of Internal Nationalist Dissent: Historical and Functional Comparisons," in S. Enders Wimbush (ed.), *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1985, pp. 1-35.

mobilization to come out into the open. Ethnic mobilization is difficult to undo once it takes place and it is associated with ethnic violence.

Class and Ethnicity

Another pattern common to societies undergoing ethnic conflict—and one that is related to ethnically based status differences—stems from the relationship of class to ethnicity. In situations where one ethnic group is clearly economically subordinate to another ethnic group (there is a coincidence of ethnicity and class), a ranked system exists. An unranked system refers to one where class differences cut across ethnic lines. The distinction is important because different forms of ethnic conflict are associated with the two systems. Ranked systems come about as a result of conquest; colonies are usually ranked systems. The restriction of social mobility due to ethnicity—a dominant feature of a rigidly ranked system—has an obvious illegitimacy and is a source of instability. Because of a rigid hierarchy, ranked systems can last for quite some time; aggression by the subordinate ethnic group is often directed against other subordinate groups rather than toward the superior ethnic group. However, when a ranked system cracks, a social revolution usually takes place as years of pent-up frustrations and resentments are released.³⁹

The Soviet Muslim areas, and especially Central Asia, are a clear example of the pattern of a conquest of a region resulting in an ethnically ranked system. In general terms, the Muslim ethnic groups of Central Asia are overwhelmingly peasants, predominantly employed in agriculture, services, and light industry, whereas the Slavs (primarily Russians) form the core of skilled workers and managers and are almost exclusively urban.⁴⁰ In a semi-colonial manner, the Russians have formed majorities of the populations of the capitals of Central Asian republics, whereas the areas surrounding the capitals are almost totally native Muslim. There are inherent restrictions on social mobility in societies where ethnicity is an indication of social standing. These restrictions were made worse by Soviet policies that severely limited population migration from the countryside to the cities.⁴¹

Outmigration of Slavs from Central Asia since the seventies and an increasing number of indigenous, educated elites have altered the

³⁹Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 22–35.

⁴⁰Lubin, *Labour and Nationality*; Michael Rywkin, "Cadre Competition in Uzbekistan: The Ethnic Aspect," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4, 1986, pp. 183–194; and Darrell Slider, "A Note on the Class Structure of Soviet Nationalities," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4, October 1985, pp. 535–540.

⁴¹Elizabeth Clayton and Thomas Richardson, "Soviet Control of City Size," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 38, No. 1, October 1989, pp. 155–165.

rigidity of the ethnic ranking during the past two decades, but the pattern remains. The large overlap of ethnic and class distinctions, especially in Central Asia, with the Slavs' socio-economic levels clearly higher than those of the mostly peasant Muslim masses, adversely affected the material conditions and prospects of the lower ranked ethnic group and added an economic dimension as a highly visible grievance in the perception of group status. Resentment over segregation and second-class treatment figured prominently in anti-Russian grievances in virtually all riots and demonstrations in Central Asia in the seventies and eighties.⁴² The feeling seems widespread among the Muslims; according to a visiting specialist, in 1988, many Uzbeks were aware and resentful of being "second class citizens in their own republic."⁴³

Social standings of ethnic groups are relative, and the position of Central Asian Muslims as developing, backward ethnic groups in eponymous administrative regions dominated by the relatively advanced Slavs who are perceived as having taken over the region illegitimately and who are often seen as inferior⁴⁴ invites inter-ethnic competition. The net effect of the whole range of Soviet policies is that ethnicity became of paramount importance. Rather than diminishing the role of ethnicity, Soviet policies made it the single most important criterion for socioeconomic and political advancement.⁴⁵ Such situations are prone to rapid ethnic mobilization.

The Current Stage of Ethnic Conflict in the USSR

The deep polarization along ethnic lines of virtually all issues is a sign of the advanced nature of ethnic conflict in the USSR. The Soviet case follows many patterns of ethnic conflict in other polities. For example, the brutality that has accompanied the ethnic riots in Azerbaijan and in Central Asia matches closely the pattern of ethnic conflict in developing countries and it shows the traditional

⁴²For example, on the Kazakh riots in 1986, see Taras Kuzio, "Nationalist Riots in Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1988, pp. 79-100.

⁴³William Fierman, "Glasnost' in Practice: The Uzbek Experience," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1989, p. 4.

⁴⁴The Russian colonial experience was quite different from that of the French and the British; the Muslims conquered by the Russians never acquired a perception of inferiority toward the Russians. See Michael Rywkin, "Dissent in Soviet Central Asia," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 27-34; Ronald Wixman, "Ethnic Nationalism in the Caucasus," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 137-146.

⁴⁵Rasma Karklins, "Nationality Policy and Ethnic Relations in the USSR," in James R. Millar (ed.), *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR: A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 301-331.

understanding of ethnicity by the Soviet Muslims. Even the intra-Muslim clashes in 1989 between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Ferghana or the violence between Kazakhs and Dagestanis in western Kazakhstan follow the pattern that, beside the not unexpected anti-Russian riots, intersubordinate group clashes frequently take place first in an ethnically ranked system.

The ethnic conflict in the USSR stems from the unequal positions of Soviet ethnic groups, a situation traceable directly to the colonial legacy of the Russian Empire. The relative nature of ethnic conflict means that once an ethnic dimension becomes an ingrained part of the political context, it is there to stay. Ethnic conflict can be controlled, but the usual course of events (as demonstrated by other countries' experience) is that it continues to simmer, eating away at the texture of the political system, occasionally blowing up into violent riots, and sometimes resulting in civil war.

When a ranked system collapses, a social revolution often takes place. Soviet Central Asia may be heading in that direction. The problem is fairly intractable and even far-reaching administrative changes in the federal structure of the USSR, establishing a confederation of genuinely autonomous republics,⁴⁶ will not put a stop to the conflict.⁴⁷ A loose union of republics may be a useful temporary measure but the process of disintegration is likely to continue until the republics achieve full independence. Indeed, speculation on what a sovereign Central Asia will look like is a worthwhile endeavor.⁴⁸

The Soviet Muslim conscript during the 1990s will have spent virtually his entire life in an ethnically tense environment. He is likely to reflect the ethnic cleavages that permeate Soviet society by being highly aware of and identifying with his ethnicity, by being distrustful of Soviet institutions, and by being filled with a sense of resentment toward the Russians over many years of what he perceives as unfair treatment of his ethnic group. Such a soldier presents obvious problems for a Russian dominated Soviet military that has already been used to quell domestic unrest in Muslim areas.

⁴⁶There have been wide-ranging discussions about the applicability of other federal models to the USSR, such as the Swiss federation and the Belgian solution to ethnic conflict. See *Moscow News*, October 1, 1989; *Veteran*, October 2-8, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 68, December 19, 1989; I. Krylova, "Belgiya: Opyt Resheniya Natsionalnykh Problem," *Politicheskoye Obrazovaniye*, No. 6, 1989, pp. 108-112.

⁴⁷There is a growing realization in the USSR that economic reasons are not the sole cause of the ethnic strife. A more sophisticated view of the problem is being voiced by some intellectuals. See the article by Sergey V. Cheshko, in *Obshchestvennyye Nauki*, No. 6, 1989, translated in *FBIS-SOV*, No. 36, February 22, 1990, pp. 8-12 Annex.

⁴⁸Graham E. Fuller, "The Emergence of Central Asia," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1990, pp. 49-67.

IV. THE MILITARY DIMENSION

It is no secret that ethnic animosities have affected the functioning of the Soviet military. In the last few years, high-ranking Soviet military officials have used the explanation that a conscript military tends to mirror the differences found in society to deflect criticisms of the poor state of ethnic relations in the Soviet military. The explanation is genuine; there is simply no reason to believe that the Soviet military can somehow rise above such a fundamental relationship.

The ethnic conflict presents the Soviet military with two overlapping problems. One is whether all the non-Russian conscripts would be able to fulfill their assigned tasks. Would they be trained and competent to perform their duties? The other problem is how reliable some of the non-Russian conscripts would be if they were called upon to perform external military tasks or to quell domestic unrest. Would they refuse to perform the assigned tasks?

THE ISSUE OF ABILITY

The non-Russians, and the Soviet Muslims specifically, present problems for the Soviet military in terms of pure ability. This aspect of the ethnic problem in the Soviet military is especially important on the modern battlefield. Because of technological changes, the nature of the relationship between soldiers and weapons has changed. The trend has been going on since World War II but has accelerated tremendously during the past two decades. The idea of an armed man has given way to a concept of a "manned weapon" supported by an extensive and sophisticated support system.¹ As a result, the contemporary modern military is characterized by many more soldiers in combat support tasks than soldiers actually in combat arms. Soldiers in combat arms are now a battlefield component in a well-integrated force that relies on rapid communication and division of labor to achieve maximum efficiency. The prevalent thinking has been that technological changes have placed a mass, poorly trained military at a disadvantage when facing a smaller but technologically sophisticated and highly trained military. The Western militaries especially have adhered to

¹Jacques Van Doorn, *The Soldier and Social Change*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1975.

this line of thinking; the Soviet military has followed the same general trend, albeit at a slower pace. The need for specialized soldiers in highly technical support units means that, to reduce costs in time and resources, Western militaries send the better educated recruits into training for advanced, technical skills. The less educated recruits are sent to the combat arms, such as the infantry.

The high level of skill required to operate sophisticated weapons can be acquired fairly rapidly by adequately prepared soldiers. For reasons of language and education, the best prepared Soviet conscripts are Slavs, and the highly technical branches of the Soviet military, such as the Air Forces or the Strategic Rocket Forces, reflected this fact for decades by their almost total Slav composition. Most of the Muslims in the Soviet military prior to the eighties served in noncombat branches, usually in nontechnical support and construction units where the recruits received little, if any, weapons training. According to a military commissar from Azerbaijan,

[P]rior to the early 1980s, 60 percent of all [Azeri] conscripts were sent to construction units, and 40 percent were sent to combat and training subunits. Now the situation has changed dramatically. It would be sufficient to point out that in 1988, 70 percent of the [Azeri] conscripts were sent to combat and training subunits, and 30 percent were sent to construction and railroad troops.²

Prior to the eighties, those Muslims who were in the combat branches of the Soviet armed forces usually served in the ground forces. Changing demographics have seen a shift in this pattern, and Muslims are increasingly found in other branches. The student deferment law passed in 1989 has contributed greatly to the further outflow of Russians from the branches requiring technical skills and an even greater inflow of Muslims into those services. The current problem for the Soviets is that the Muslims, who are the least technically qualified of all the Soviet draftees—because their level of education is usually inferior to that of the Russians and most of them are unable to communicate in Russian—are becoming indispensable to the Soviet military. This problem, plus the fact that the days when a poorly educated conscript could become a viable soldier after being given only basic training and a rifle are gone, combine to undermine the effectiveness of the Soviet military. The issue is one of education, but underlying it is the basic problem of language.

²Interview with Major General A. A. Kasimov, *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, October 18, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 28, November 27, 1989, pp. 10-11.

The Problem of Education

For a variety of reasons, the quality of elementary and secondary education in the Muslim areas is inferior to that in the Russian areas. The high rates of natural increase in Muslim regions have outstripped the educational infrastructure and exacerbated the existing problems of lack of textbooks, overcrowded schools, and insufficient number of qualified teachers. The practice in certain areas of Central Asia of clearing out schools and using child labor to help in harvesting (for example, harvesting cotton in Uzbekistan) further detracts from the quality of education. These problems are most acute in rural areas where the majority of Muslims live. It is difficult to judge just how bad the situation is, but the Soviet media have reported on the supposedly quickly rising numbers of completely illiterate (in any language) Muslim conscripts.³ There are no short-term solutions to these difficulties, and if anything, the insufficient investments in education in the Muslim areas will continue to exert a pernicious influence on another generation of Muslim children. Educational shortcomings can be remedied to an extent through an intensive and lengthy training in the military. However, such measures are costly and inefficient, they provide only a partial solution, and the Soviet conscript army is not suited well for them. Since individual soldier aptitude is closely correlated with combat performance,⁴ the decreasing quality of Soviet conscripts has a negative effect on the overall Soviet military quality.

The Problem of Language

Language problems of the non-Slavic, and especially the Muslim, recruits are more serious than educational shortcomings for the Soviet military. As one Soviet writer put it,

The Russian language serves all the needs of the Army. Service regulations, instructions and manuals on military equipment and weapons are written in it. Orders, commands, and instructions are issued in it. It guarantees the mutual understanding of military personnel belonging to different nationalities on and off duty.⁵

³*Pravda*, January 24, 1988.

⁴This is particularly true in the complex arms, such as the tank forces, but it holds as well for the infantry. See Patrick J. Whitmarsh and Robert H. Sulzen, "Prediction of Simulated Infantry-Combat Performance from a General Measure of Individual Aptitude," *Military Psychology*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1989, pp. 111-116.

⁵M. N. Guboglo (ed.), *Improving National Relations in the USSR in Light of the Decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress*, Moscow, 1987, translated in its entirety in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 14-L, October 16, 1989, p. 102.

Most of the officers are Russian (or Slavic) and it is highly unusual for a Slav to speak a language indigenous to the Muslims. The fact that most Muslims cannot speak Russian means that they are unable to read manuals on use of military equipment. In the U.S. military, literacy is critical; because of the costly, technologically complex equipment and the need to use it properly, soldiers must be able to read large amounts of technical manuals.⁶ The situation in the Soviet military is similar if not as advanced. During the past few years, the Soviet media have stressed this point *ad nauseum*. For example, Colonel General Popkov, then chief of the Ground Forces political directorate, remarked that linguistic problems (especially among Caucasians and Central Asians) have "an adverse effect . . . on the time . . . [the recruits] take to master combat specialties and hardware."⁷ The narrow specialization favored by the Soviets does not solve the problem because of the reduced percentage of Slavic conscripts and the growing need for recruits well-prepared for service.⁸ The problem is acute not only because of the greater number of Muslims but also because of the greater number of ethnic groups represented in each unit. According to a Soviet military sociologist,

soldiers representing 10-15 nationalities were serving in companies and equivalent subunits in 1980, while soldiers of up to 18 nationalities were serving there in 1988.⁹

The greater ethnic diversification within units, both in terms of overall numbers and ethnic groups, adds to the communication problem.

The Likelihood of a Worsening Problem. The linguistic problem, already probably the single most important factor affecting Soviet military capabilities, is bound to become even worse if conscription continues. There are at least five reasons why the situation will continue to worsen. First, in an ethnic conflict of the type taking place in the USSR, language assumes a central significance and the status and extent of use of the language are issues of great symbolic importance. Second, and related to the first point, Soviet language policy has left

⁶Thomas M. Duffy, "Literacy Instruction in the Military," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Spring 1985, pp. 437-467.

⁷*Krasnaya Zvezda*, May 7, 1987.

⁸The Soviet military press has complained about the difficulty of training Caucasian recruits who do not know Russian to be radio-telegraphers. Training people who cannot speak Russian to be in positions where speaking Russian constantly is required shows the dire situation within the Soviet military. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, March 1, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 11, May 15, 1989, p. 47.

⁹*Sovetskiy Voin*, No. 4, February 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 13, May 26, 1989, pp. 2-6.

such a negative legacy that a backlash has sprung up against the use and learning of Russian in most non-Russian, including Muslim, areas. Third, infrastructure problems have an adverse effect for the teaching of Russian in Muslim areas, as discussed more fully below. Fourth, the Muslims' languages are quite different from Russian and lengthy, high-quality education is needed to have any effect. Fifth, migration trends portend a lesser Slavic presence in Central Asia (in relative and absolute terms), which will further decrease inter-ethnic contact and thus limit the use of Russian.

1. *Language and Identity.* The view of language as an ascriptive trait in the Muslim areas of the USSR means that an individual perceives his native language as an integral component of his ethnic identity. Normally, that in itself would not prevent bilingualism, but in conditions of acute ethnic conflict that exist in the USSR, and because of the legacy of Russian domination that has led to the perception that an expansion of the use of Russian is a way of deethnicizing the non-Russians, the view of language as an ascriptive trait serves as an impediment to a wider use of Russian. Language has become a central component in the ethnic conflict in the USSR, and, at the same time as all kinds of practical issues have become pawns in the quest for symbolism, prestige, and status, there has been an across-the-board effort to reduce the use of Russian and increase the use of the vernacular in all spheres of life in nearly all non-Russian areas. The linguistic issue is tied closely to ethnic unrest, and as long as ethnic unrest lasts so will the pressure against the use of Russian in non-Russian areas.

2. *The Backlash Against Russian.* Closely related is the backlash resulting from Soviet language policies against the use of Russian. Besides the practical effect of creating an atmosphere of distrust about the Soviet regime's motives in attempting to increase the non-Russians' knowledge of Russian, the bitter legacy of the Soviet language policy contributed to the extraordinarily quick emergence of the language issue as a central factor in the ethnic conflict. The backlash against the Soviet language policy is visible in the attempts to revert to the original Arabic scripts of the Muslims' languages¹⁰ and to expunge Russian loan words. The purpose of these gradual steps is to reverse the damage to the non-Russian languages, and their net effect will be to accentuate the anti-assimilatory and centrifugal tendencies with further negative consequences for the knowledge of Russian among the Muslims.

¹⁰The demand has been raised in all of Central Asia. For an overview, see Erika Dailey, "Update on Alphabet Legislation," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 32, August 11, 1989, pp. 29-31.

3. *The Educational Infrastructure.* The problem of the lack of educational infrastructure in Central Asia has special difficulties when it comes to teaching Russian.¹¹ Primary among these problems is the shortage of teachers, with the situation being catastrophic in the rural schools. The teachers of Russian who are of Muslim background, and who therefore speak the local language, are generally poorly trained. The teachers of Russian who are Slavic (usually Russian) are relatively well-trained but their lack of knowledge of the local language inhibits the effectiveness of their teaching to children. The low developmental level of most of rural Central Asia means that the region is not attractive to most non-Muslim teachers of Russian and many of them do not last for long in the region. The male-dominated environment may be another impediment in view of the preponderance of females among the Slavic teachers of Russian. The local Central Asian press continually reports on the large numbers of teachers who either never show up at their posts or leave their assigned schools before completing their tenure.

The acute lack of qualified teachers of Russian means that Russian is taught by poorly trained teachers, by completely untrained teachers, or it is not taught at all. In the last decade, there has been an avalanche of criticism about the poor teachers of Russian. The Soviet military press has been in the forefront of these complaints.

Added to the lack of qualified teachers is a perennial school shortage in Central Asia. Combined with the rapidly growing population in the rural areas, this means that precisely in the areas where the shortage is the worst the situation is likely to deteriorate even further. Teaching aids and textbooks are constantly in short supply and they are often of poor quality—written by Russians for the whole country, without taking into account the language differences among the ethnic groups of the USSR. Traditional teaching techniques favored in the Soviet school system—learning by rote—and a seeming basic lack of understanding by teachers of the children's developmental processes further detract from the quality of education.¹² The aforementioned problems are most acute in Muslim rural areas, but the similar low ability of urban Muslims to communicate in Russian (once the level of contact with Russians is statistically accounted for) disproves the idea that the teaching of Russian in urban schools is significantly better.¹³

¹¹M. Mobin Shorish, "The Pedagogical, Linguistic, and Logistical Problems of Teaching Russian to the Local Soviet Central Asians," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 1976, pp. 443-462.

¹²For examples of the problems with teaching techniques, see Shorish, pp. 459-461.

¹³Brian Silver, "Bilingualism and Maintenance of the Mother Tongue in Soviet Central Asia," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 1976, p. 418.

4. *The Differences of Muslim Languages.* The native languages of the Soviet Muslims are very different from Russian. Only Tajik is remotely related to Russian by the virtue of being an Indo-European language. However, Tajik belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch whereas Russian belongs to the Balto-Slavic branch; thus, the relation is distant and is recognizable only to linguists. The Turkic and Caucasian languages spoken by most Soviet Muslims are totally unrelated to Russian. The Soviet language policy attempted to introduce some similarities, but they were too artificial to make any real difference. The distinctness of Russian from the Muslims' languages means that Russian is exceptionally difficult for the Muslims to learn. The phonemic problem is most serious and is common to all Turkic speakers; depending on the native language, Turkic-speaking Muslim children have difficulties in distinguishing between certain pairs of related sounds (such as b-v, p-f, and others).¹⁴ These problems lead to severe difficulties with orthography and pronunciation. In addition, severe differences in syntax further complicate the acquisition of a passable knowledge of Russian.

5. *Migration Trends.* The further deterioration in the knowledge of Russian among Muslims, especially in Central Asia, is also traceable to the connection between the presence of Russians in a locale and a rise in the level of knowledge of Russian among the indigenous ethnic group.¹⁵ The outmigration of Russians (and Slavs in general) from Central Asian republics and the Caucasus,¹⁶ combined with slow migration into urban areas of Central Asia by indigenous Muslims (and their continued refusal to migrate to other areas of the USSR), as well as high fertility rates among the Central Asian Muslims, means that the level of inter-ethnic contact that has aided the spread of Russian language in the past will plummet.

Overall, the prospects for improvement in acquisition of even a rudimentary knowledge of Russian language by the Muslims appear slim if not impossible in the short run. The importance of the status of language in an ethnic conflict and the self-perpetuating cycle of the lack of knowledge of Russian by the Soviet Muslims means that the issue will not go away and that it is likely to become worse.

¹⁴Shorish, pp. 450-452.

¹⁵Ronald Wixman, "Territorial Russification and Linguistic Russianization in Some Soviet Republics," *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 22, No. 10, December 1981, pp. 667-675.

¹⁶Richard H. Rowland, "Union Republic Migration Trends in the USSR During the 1980s," *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 29, No. 9, November 1988, pp. 809-829. Latest census figures show that the trend has become a stampede out of Kazakhstan and Kirghizia especially. See Ann Sheehy, "1989 Census Data on Internal Migration in the USSR," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 45, November 10, 1989, pp. 7-9.

Attempts to Remedy the Language Problem. It is clear that in the eighties the overwhelming majority of Soviet Muslim conscripts either did not know any Russian or knew only a few words. In the last few years, it has become customary for the Soviet media to give figures ranging from 70 to 95 percent as the ratio of Muslim conscripts who have virtually no knowledge of Russian. The Soviets have tried to remedy the problem for quite some time.

Since the late sixties and with the realization of the effect that demographic trends would have for the USSR, the better teaching of Russian to the non-Russian Soviet youth received increasingly greater stress. Gradually, the study of Russian became compulsory for longer periods of time, beginning at an earlier age, so that by the late seventies, Russian began to be taught in kindergartens throughout the USSR. Soviet Muslims were the primary target of the last two decades of the Soviet language policies¹⁷ and military motives and economic rationale were the main factors in initiating the measures. A major Soviet research program in military sociology was launched in the late sixties, and a better link between military preparation of future conscripts and their knowledge of Russian has been stressed since that time, although the results have not been favorable.¹⁸

The Soviet military has been decidedly unenthusiastic about creating any kind of a remedial Russian language instruction infrastructure in the armed forces. A crash course in Russian for non-Russian draftees who did not know the language was finally introduced in the early eighties. It probably improved the situation a little but such measures do not begin to address the issue of reading and understanding technical information in Russian. Although non-Russians leave the military with a rudimentary knowledge of Russian, their level of proficiency is quite limited.¹⁹ In the mid-eighties, the level of Russian taught in the military to non-Russian speaking draftees was startlingly basic, often starting with introducing the Cyrillic alphabet or teaching phrases such

¹⁷Roman Solchanyk, "Russian Language and Soviet Politics," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 1982, pp. 23-42; Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification? Some Critical Thoughts on Russian as a *Lingua Franca* and the 'Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR'," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 40, No. 3, July 1981, p. 331.

¹⁸These steps are documented in detail in Martha Brill Olcott and William Fierman, "The Challenge of Integration: Soviet Nationality Policy and the Muslim Conscript," *Soviet Union*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1987, pp. 65-101.

¹⁹A study based on 1970 census figures showed no significant differences between Muslim males and females in terms of acquisition of Russian. If military service improved the knowledge of Russian, there should have been some difference based on sex. See Patricia T. Caro, "Differences in Language Retention Between Males and Females in the USSR, 1970," *Soviet Geography*, Vol. 23, No. 1, January 1982, pp. 31-48.

as "this is a soldier."²⁰ In 1987, a special Russian textbook, designed to be used by small groups of soldiers to tutor each other, was introduced in the army.²¹

Since the dawn of *glasnost*, the Soviet media have often noted the problems caused by the Muslim recruits' lack of knowledge of Russian. In a celebrated case that sparked an international incident, a Kazakh tank driver caused a collision between his tank and a train in East Germany when he failed to understand the tank commander's instructions.²² Several Soviet journalists have written that interpreters have become indispensable in some units. For example, in 1987, an Air Defense Forces unit was said to contain Uzbek and Turkmeni draftees who had to be addressed by their commander through an interpreter.²³

There are simply no easy remedies for the lack of linguistic skills. Given the difficulties involved, the military can marginally improve the situation but cannot solve it; attempts by the military to remedy the language problem are too late in the recruit's educational process to make a significant difference. The frustrated and often desperate tone of Soviet officers' comments as they explain why they cannot achieve a high state of combat readiness with units composed of poorly educated and non-Russian speaking recruits is a good indication of the extent of the problem and the lack of options to solve it. The reinstitution of draft deferments for students in July 1989 made a bad situation worse.²⁴ The release of 176,000 students from active duty, most of whom had been serving in technical posts, created grave problems for the Soviet military, especially for the highly technical branches. Thus, the Strategic Rocket Forces, previously mainly Russian, have been seriously affected. Lieutenant General I. D. Sergeyev recently related his experience of visiting a mobile ICBM base in the Soviet Far East—out of 40 Azeris in the unit, only two understood Russian.²⁵ Sergeyev attributed the problem to the student deferments.

Any military force will strive to maximize its efficiency in fulfilling its functional imperative—the defense of the state. A military organi-

²⁰For an overview of Soviet media treatment of the language problem and other difficulties with non-Russian recruits between 1984–1986, see "Press Selections on Officer Corps' Cadre Policy," *JPRS-UMA*, No. 18-L, December 3, 1987, especially "Language Training," pp. 88–152.

²¹Michael Orr, "The Lessons of the Afghan War," *Soviet Analyst*, Vol. 17, No. 12, June 15, 1988, p. 5.

²²*Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, June 21, 1988.

²³*Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 1, 1987.

²⁴Stephen Foye, "Students and the Soviet Military," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 39, September 29, 1989, pp. 7–11.

²⁵*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, March 7, 1990.

zation is bound to be dissatisfied with having to perform tasks it sees as not in its sphere of responsibility or peripheral to its principal goal. Running an extensive language education program is such a peripheral task and the Soviet military is clearly uncomfortable with it. The military's complaint that measures to solve the language problem are taken too slowly by the civilian authorities is an example of the military attempting to place responsibility on other state bodies for proper education, to pressure them into quicker action, and to absolve itself of the negative consequences for military readiness.

Conclusions

Linguistic and educational problems threaten the effectiveness of the Soviet military by introducing insurmountable physical problems to forming cohesive units. Recruits with an inadequate knowledge of Russian are a barrier to achieving a passable level of efficiency with technologically advanced weapons, for even if the mechanical aspects of operating a weapon are mastered, the non-Russian-speaking Muslim soldier will not fit in as part of a team that relies on rapid communication for success. On the modern battlefield, this is a critical weakness. Individual training of a Muslim soldier *becomes elongated*, compared with his Russian counterpart. Small unit training becomes difficult and a low ceiling on unit effectiveness is established. A Soviet unit that contains a large portion of Muslim soldiers is likely to perform poorly in combined arms operations where efficient and timely communication is essential. Such problems amount to an inability to achieve high readiness quickly and poor offensive potential. Military performance is curtailed, especially in sustained operations or in a prolonged conflict, since the "staying power" of such units is limited. In short, most Soviet Muslims are not suitable for tasks other than combat and support duties requiring low skill levels. In the modern military, such positions are increasingly harder to find. None of this is to imply that Muslims are in any way inherently less able than the Russians. The lack of an adequate educational infrastructure coupled with motivational problems (discussed below), place Soviet Muslims at a disadvantage.

THE ISSUE OF RELIABILITY

The high level of ethnic conflict in the USSR and the possibility of the use of the military to quell separatist tendencies make the issue of reliability especially salient. Although reliability is a qualitative aspect

that is harder to measure than pure ability, theories of military sociology applied comparatively to the Soviet case can provide rough estimates of the efficiency of a Soviet military composed of many ethnic groups.

Historical Treatment of Soviet Muslims by the Soviet Military

The Soviet military has historically treated Muslims in a manner that indicates far-reaching doubts about the Muslims' sense of loyalties. The various Muslim ethnic groups have had different experiences in the Russian and the Soviet militaries.

Czarist employment of Muslims in the military dates back to the initial Russian expansion into Muslim lands in the sixteenth century.²⁶ However, with the exception of a few volunteers of other Muslim ethnic groups, only the Tatars and, arguably, the Bashkirs,²⁷ served in significant numbers in the Russian army until World War I. Central Asian Muslims proved to be unruly subjects of the empire and the region was under only loose Russian control between its initial seizure in the second half of the nineteenth century and World War I.²⁸ Questionable loyalty of the Caucasian and Central Asian Muslims, combined with sufficient Slavic manpower and anxiety over command and control problems with a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous military, meant that conscription—instituted in Russia in 1874—was virtually not applied to Central Asian Muslims and applied in only the most limited manner to Caucasian Muslims. Heavy Russian losses during the first two years of World War I led to the extension of conscription to Central Asian Muslims in 1916. Although the Muslims were earmarked for noncombat duty, the move inspired a massive rebellion. Only after heavy fighting were some Central Asian Muslims drafted for support duties on the German-Russian front.

During the Russian Civil War, the various Muslim ethnic groups reacted to a breakdown of central rule with declarations of independence. The Volga Muslims opted for independence and the Tatar-Bashkir army that was formed had a pan-Turkic, anti-Russian charac-

²⁶For an overview of the employment of non-Russians in the Russian and Soviet militaries, see Susan L. Curran and Dmitry Ponomareff, "Managing the Ethnic Factor in the Russian and Soviet Armed Forces, A Historical Overview," in Alexiev and Wimbush, *Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army*, pp. 9-67.

²⁷Robert F. Baumann, "Subject Nationalities in the Military Service of Imperial Russia: The Case of the Bashkirs," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3-4, Fall-Winter 1987, pp. 489-502.

²⁸Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Central Asian Uprisings in the Nineteenth Century: Ferghana Under the Russians," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3, July 1987, pp. 267-282.

ter.²⁹ Central Asia and the North Caucasus proved to be the most difficult areas for the Bolsheviks to subjugate (out of the areas of the empire they were able to reconquer); large-scale combat in Central Asia lasted until 1924. The anti-communist resistance had a strong (North Caucasus) or partial (Central Asia) religious overtone; because of it, the resistance was popularly perceived as the first Muslim holy war against the communists.³⁰ Sporadic fighting went on in both areas well into the thirties, and even later in the North Caucasus.

There is still some question about the participation of Muslims during the Civil War. Although a quarter of a million Muslims (in Muslim formations) apparently took part in the Civil War on the Bolshevik side, the overwhelming majority of them were Volga Muslims.³¹ The figure indicates that a sizable portion of the Tatars from the czarist army stayed on in military formations during the chaos of the Civil War, denoting *Jadidist* (Islamic modernist school of thought, strong in the Tatar region at the time) support for some of the Bolsheviks' aims. Furthermore, in conditions of civil war, where issues were complex and the Bolsheviks proclaimed a universalist ethos (unlike the Whites, who stressed continuity with the Russian empire), shifts of position could be expected. However, Muslim formations generally were uninspired by the Red-White hostilities, they often remained passive, and many units were violently disbanded by the Bolsheviks. Central Asian and Caucasian Muslims did not contribute significantly to the Bolshevik victory and resisted both the Whites and the Reds—an indication of anti-czarist, if not anti-Russian, feelings that transcended other divisions.³²

In the initial period of communist rule, national military units were formed and gradual, long-range plans to build national military units

²⁹Curran and Ponomareff, "Managing the Ethnic Factor," p. 31; Alexandre Bennigsen, "Marxism or Pan-Islamism: Russian Bolsheviks and Tatar National Communists at the Beginning of the Civil War, July 1918," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1987, pp. 55-66.

³⁰Eden Naby, "The Concept of Jihad in Opposition to Communist Rule: Turkestan and Afghanistan," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 19, No. 3-4, Autumn/Winter 1986, pp. 287-300; Alexandre Bennigsen, *The Soviet Union and Muslim Guerrilla Wars, 1920-1981: Lessons for Afghanistan*, The RAND Corporation, N-1707/1, August 1981.

³¹Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979, pp. 64-65; Maksudov, "La Composition Nationale de L'Armee Rouge d'apres le Recensement de 1920," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique*, Vol. 24, No. 4, October-December 1983, pp. 483-492.

³²Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejay, "Muslim National Minorities in Revolution and Civil War," in Wimbush, *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*, pp. 36-60. The participation of Central Asians during the Civil War has been treated as a "blank spot" in the Gorbachev-inspired reevaluation of history. More truthful accounts are bound to be forthcoming. See "Vstrechi v Alma-Ate," *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 8, August 1988, pp. 182-183.

from the ground up (beginning with education and training of cadres) were worked out by Marshal Frunze. The slow pace was necessitated by the widespread opposition among the Muslims to serve in the Soviet military. For example, Soviet plans for compulsory mobilization of Central Asian Muslims in 1923 had to be dropped because of the intense unpopularity of such measures.³³ Although national units were watched with extraordinary care by the party commissars (the one-man command system, initiated in 1925, did not apply to national units), problems with loyalty soon surfaced, and during the mid-thirties the experiment with national units was terminated without ever being implemented on a large scale.

Until recently, Soviet historians claimed that significant numbers of Muslims took part in the fighting on the Soviet side during World War II. Much of the data are suspect, and during the last few years some Soviet historians have openly called for a truthful version of the Central Asians' participation during the Second World War.³⁴ In the war against the Nazis, Muslims in the Soviet Army either did not distinguish themselves or were outright ineffective. Central Asians' losses during World War II were minor; there is no significant demographic scar in the age distribution of Central Asians of the type that is found in Russian or Ukrainian demographic graphs. Caucasian and Central Asian Muslims (as well as Tatars) cooperated with the Germans on such a wide scale that some of these ethnic groups may have been better represented in the Wehrmacht (because of defections) than in the Red Army.³⁵ When the Soviets resumed the strategic initiative in 1943, most of the Muslim soldiers were withdrawn from combat. In certain Muslim-inhabited areas "liberated" by the Red Army, such as the Karachay autonomous *oblast* in the North Caucasus, widespread guerrilla warfare greeted the return of Soviet rule.³⁶ The unprecedented scale of collaboration of Muslims with the Germans led to Stalin's revenge on whole ethnic groups. Karachays, Balkars,

³³Glenda Fraser, "Basmachi-II," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1987, pp. 7-42.

³⁴Two trends are noticeable in recent accounts of the Muslims' performance during World War II: (1) a tendency to try to absolve the Muslim ethnic groups of charges of having cooperated with the Germans by contrasting the supposedly limited collaboration with a significant effort on behalf of the Soviet army, and (2) assigning greater importance to the Muslims' contribution to the war effort on the "home front."

³⁵Alexander R. Alexiev, "Soviet Nationalities in German Wartime Strategy, 1941-1945," in Alexiev and Wimbush, *Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army*, pp. 69-120; Alexander R. Alexiev, "Soviet Nationalities Under Attack: The World War II Experience," in Wimbush, *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*, pp. 61-74.

³⁶Recently, Soviet historians have provided some details on the extent of the anti-Soviet resistance. See N. F. Bugay, "K Voprosu o Deportatsyi Narodov SSSR v 30-40-kh godakh," *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 6, November-December 1989, pp. 135-144, especially p. 140.

Chechens, Ingush, and the Crimean Tatars (among Muslim ethnic groups) suffered atrocities and were deported *en masse* to other regions of the USSR following the Red Army's entry into their areas.

All national units (formed again during World War II) disappeared from the Soviet armed forces by the late fifties and, despite a vigorous attempt since the mid-sixties to use the military as an agent of socialization of the non-Russian recruits, the overall pattern since the Second World War has been for the Soviets to relegate the Muslims to secondary, low-skill, noncombat tasks. Only in the late seventies did demographic problems force changes in this *de facto* segregation. The Muslims' linguistic and educational deficiencies were the reasons for the practice, but questionable loyalty and doubts about motivation may have led to an institutional bias that contributed to the virtual absence of Muslims in Soviet elite formations.

The cases of fraternization between Soviet Central Asian soldiers and Afghans following the Soviet 1979 military intervention in Afghanistan probably reinforced any lingering Soviet doubts about the reliability of Soviet Muslim soldiers.³⁷ For whatever reasons, Soviet Muslims did not distinguish themselves in Afghanistan. Only five of the 65 publicly identified winners of the Hero of the Soviet Union award were Muslims (one each from Tajik, Ingush, Tatar, Uzbek, and Kazakh ethnic groups).³⁸ Compared with the 44 Russians and 12 Ukrainians who received the award, and in view of the growing numbers of Muslim conscripts in the combat arms of the Soviet ground forces in the eighties, the figures were highly unrepresentative and reminiscent of World War II, when 8182 Russians and 2072 Ukrainians received the award, but only 12 Kirghiz, 15 Tajiks, and 18 Turkmen received the medal. The Afghanistan experience demonstrated that while not excelling in military skills, Soviet Muslim soldiers were adept at black-marketeering, smuggling, drug-dealing, and currency manipulation. The war appears to have intensified Muslim soldiers' disaffection and negative self-assertion.

The current stage of ethnic unrest in the USSR can only reinforce the institutional trends of distrust of the Muslims shown historically by the Soviet military. The continuing evidence of a lack of Muslim assimilation probably also reinforces doubts about the Muslims' reliability. The reliability problem in the Soviet military can be gauged by

³⁷Alexander R. Alexiev and S. Enders Wimbush, "Soviet Muslim Soldiers in Afghanistan," in Alexiev and Wimbush, *Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army*, pp. 237-254; Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan*, The RAND Corporation, R-3627-A, May 1988, pp. 41-44.

³⁸"Heroes of the Soviet Union—Afghanistan," *Jane's Soviet Intelligence Review*, March 1989, pp. 111-115.

applying findings on sociopolitical alienation and its relationship to military efficiency³⁹ to the Soviet case.

Sociopolitical Alienation

To begin with, every military force operates "on the assumption that given the proper organizational climate the vast majority of recruits can be developed into efficient soldiers."⁴⁰ Previously, Soviet conscripts who passed preinduction screenings but who were unlikely to become efficient soldiers (those who were suspected of being politically unreliable or who had poor language skills) were sent to support units. The segregation of Muslim soldiers by relegating them to support duties was curtailed by demographic pressures; to continue to field a large military force, the Soviets have had to accept Muslim conscripts into regular combat units. The background of the Soviet Muslims and their experience in the Soviet military fits well the profile of an alienated soldier, with alienation defined as a condition of estrangement. There are three dimensions of alienation that are relevant to military efficiency: meaninglessness, isolation, and trust.

Meaninglessness refers to lack of a clear set of values or uncertainty on the part of an individual about what he ought to believe. *Isolation* means that an individual has a different set of values from that commonly held by society. A congruence of values between the individual and society usually results in the individual possessing trust that actions dictated by societal institutions are right and proper; a lack of such congruence results in cynicism and distrust.

Alienation is a psychological dimension that deals with the values held by individuals. In its applicability to the military milieu, alienation refers to the lack of acceptance of the values represented by the military institution. These values usually are the underlying values of the group that dominates the power structure of the polity. In the Soviet military, just as in Soviet society, the real values, below the pretense of democratic socialism and equality of Soviet "nationalities," have been Russian-imposed and based on the unequal, hierarchical arrangement of ethnic groups, with the Russians dominating the power structure. A microcosm of such a set-up was (and remains) the military, with virtually all higher-ranking officers Russian, lower-ranking officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) mainly Slavs if not Russians, and the Russian language the only accepted means of

³⁹Stephen D. Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Alienation and Military Efficiency," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Winter 1980, pp. 170-189.

⁴⁰Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Alienation," p. 170.

communication. In a sense, the rigid hierarchical structure inherent to every military, including the Soviet armed forces, only accentuates the already acute ethnic tensions found in Soviet society.

The alienation of the Muslim soldier from the customs and values espoused by the Soviet military is strongly entrenched, as has been noticed by numerous Soviet commentators. The formation of cliques based on ethnicity within military units (the practice is referred to in Russian as *zemlyachestvo* or *gruppovshchina*) and the brutality and even open combat between the cliques within units⁴¹ have been features of the Soviet military for at least a decade; the situation has become progressively worse as the ethnic ratios in many units have become more diversified, and a Russian or even a Slavic majority is no longer a given. The largest recently reported ethnic clash in the Soviet military took place on December 12, 1989, involving some 700 soldiers from Uzbekistan and the Caucasus (not identified further); MVD troops had to be called in to restore order.⁴² Soviet officials have taken special measures to isolate Armenians from Azeris in the Soviet military because of many incidents of violent clashes between them. Since 1987, the Soviet media has reported voluminously on the problem of national cliques in military units, and the highest Soviet military officials have discussed it.⁴³ Depending on the mix of nationalities in the unit, various cliques may form. Recruits from the smaller ethnic groups, such as the Balts, usually end up as outcasts and are especially susceptible to hazing practices (which may be why draftees from the smaller ethnic groups have been among the most outspoken about the harassment).⁴⁴ According to a Soviet navy lieutenant, "even a recent inductee with the support of other personnel of the same nationality with strong fists may indulge in bullying against a fellow serviceman who does not have a 'nationality' back-up."⁴⁵

Because of demographic trends, and depending on the ethnic makeup of the specific unit, a Russian or a Slavic group usually forms and so does a Central Asian group and a Caucasian one. The brutal hazing practices (known in Russian as *dedovshchina*), endemic in the

⁴¹For ex-soldiers' descriptions of ethnically motivated violence, see Alexander R. Alexiev and S. Enders Wimbush, "The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Alexiev and Wimbush, *Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army*, pp. 121-195.

⁴²Radio Moscow (in Spanish), December 14, 1989, as reported in Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 51, December 22, 1989, p. 38.

⁴³For example, comments by Chief of Staff General Mikhail Moiseyev, TASS, October 25, 1989.

⁴⁴Suzanne Crow, "Soviet Conscripts Fall Victim to Ethnic Violence," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 41, October 13, 1989, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁵Letter to the editor from Senior Lieutenant A. Yaichenko, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 13, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, November 9, 1989, p. 2.

Soviet military, take their cruelest form in inter-ethnic relations between soldiers. Countless reports of this practice have appeared in the Soviet media in the last few years. For example, a Russian soldier claimed that he did not dare to go alone into the "Muslim-controlled" barracks because he knew he would be beaten brutally.⁴⁶ In another instance in the early eighties, an Estonian veteran of Afghanistan, commenting on the Central Asian soldiers in his unit, reported that the Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and others had a "blind hatred" toward Soviet soldiers from virtually all other ethnic groups.⁴⁷ A Soviet military sociologist, Colonel Yuriy Deryugin, confirmed the existence of different value systems based on ethnicity among the recruits and the lack of assimilation of the Muslim conscripts by noting that Central Asian and Caucasian recruits were inclined to stay together and that "substantial differences in temperament, specific habits, ideas, opinions, and so on" existed between the soldiers of various ethnic backgrounds.⁴⁸

Hazing and ethnic scapegoating in the military have become widely known and feared in the USSR, and all kinds of rumors have sprung up that could only worsen the perception of the state of affairs. For example, there were rumors that Azeri soldiers were injected with "medicine" that made them impotent.⁴⁹ There were also more serious rumors that Uzbek recruits from Ferghana valley were murdered in revenge for the riots in June 1989,⁵⁰ and that some 90 Azeri recruits were slain.⁵¹ Such rumors, probably exaggerations and distortions of real incidents, have an effect. Protests at induction centers have increased tremendously during the last year and led to threats of boycotts of the draft in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

The ethnically based hazing practices in the Soviet military may have been strengthened by the institutional prejudice in the Soviet military against non-"Europeans." A good deal of evidence of such prejudice has surfaced in the last few years in the Soviet media—the

⁴⁶*Izvestiya*, August 11, 1988.

⁴⁷*Eesti Päevaleht*, March 27, 1985, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 17-L, July 17, 1985, p. 28.

⁴⁸*Argumenty i Fakty*, August 27–September 2, 1988, translated in *FBIS-SOV*, No. 173, September 7, 1988, pp. 85–87.

⁴⁹Interview with Major General Abulfaz Gasymov, the military commissar for Azerbaijan, *Adabiyat va Injisanat*, August 11, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 1, January 4, 1990, p. 15.

⁵⁰Interview with Major General A. I. Zakharov, *Komsomolets Uzbekistana*, October 7, 1989, translated in *JPRS-UPA*, No. 58, October 30, 1989, pp. 55–56; James Critchlow, "Uzbek Army Recruits Believed Murdered to Avenge Fergana Killings," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 44, November 3, 1989, pp. 23–25.

⁵¹Reuters, October 20, 1989.

prejudice is in many ways a continuation of traditional Russian racism toward Oriental and Turkic peoples.⁵² For example, a Soviet officer, commenting on the practice of always sending Central Asian recruits to kitchen duty while other soldiers engaged in weapons training, remarked that the Central Asians did not even try to protest because "they realized that they were incapable of doing anything more."⁵³ Such a paternalistic, condescending attitude has been echoed in other off-the-cuff remarks by Soviet officers.⁵⁴ Ex-Soviet servicemen have indicated in Western surveys that Soviet NCOs and officers abuse recruits and engage in racial slurs.⁵⁵

Available data combined with a theoretical understanding of the problem indicate that Muslim conscripts feel a sense of deep isolation from the norms and rules in the Soviet military and the value system for which the military stands and enforces. Thrown involuntarily into a foreign structure, sent to a different region (usually thousands of miles from his village), and often coming into direct contact with Russians for the first time in his life, an 18-year-old Muslim conscript is then exposed to brutal and punitive measures meted out to him by his peers and superiors for no apparent reason except his ethnicity.

The hazing experience is traumatic in itself. In the Western militaries, where there is nothing close to the almost institutionalized hazing practices in the Soviet military, personal harassment is one of the main reasons for a soldier's desertion or failure to reenlist.⁵⁶ In the Soviet military, the abused recruit is sealed off from society and cannot appeal to his superiors for help (such complaints are usually ignored by the officers and may trigger revenge from the culprits). It is not unexpected that in such situations a Muslim conscript gravitates to other recruits whose ethnic background resembles his own for protection and some basis of commonality. Besides having common religious and cultural features, Soviet Muslims also usually share common racial and linguistic (Turkic) characteristics, as well as similar social perceptions and values; there are many reports of recruits from various Muslim

⁵²Seymour Becker, "The Muslim East in Nineteenth-Century Russian Popular Historiography," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4, 1986, pp. 25-47.

⁵³*Sovetskaya Kultura*, December 22, 1988.

⁵⁴For example, a Soviet lieutenant colonel acknowledged that some commanders are guided by prejudice in assigning tasks to Muslim soldiers. *Sovetskyi Voin*, No. 4, February 1989, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 13, May 26, 1989, pp. 2-6.

⁵⁵Alexiev and Wimbush, "The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces"; Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan*.

⁵⁶Morris Janowitz, "Civic Consciousness and Military Performance," in Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook (ed.), *The Political Education of Soldiers*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, p. 75. In a seeming confirmation of this trend, Soviet officials have acknowledged that incidents of desertion and draft evasion have mushroomed.

backgrounds, such as Tatars and Central Asians, quickly finding a common language.⁵⁷

The isolation of the Muslim recruit undoubtedly leads to confusion over the meaning of his military service and the creation of an enormous status discongruence, with the harsh reality of the Soviet military conflicting openly with the Muslim recruit's sense of values while he is forced to be a part of the Soviet military. Besides the sense of meaninglessness that such military service entails for the Muslim conscript, the situation also results in cynicism toward the military itself as well as the organization that the military is serving—the Soviet state. Overall, it seems that a deep sense of alienation permeates a Muslim conscript's tour of military duty.

The principal source of alienation is external to the military and most alienated soldiers bring their feelings of alienation with them into the military.⁵⁸ The Soviet case is unlikely to be different. The multidimensional nature of the Muslims' lack of assimilation and the high degree of inter-ethnic animosity that stems from resentment against the differences in status based on ethnicity are aspects of reality deeply ingrained in an ethnically mobilized Muslim's psyche when he enters the Soviet military. The military is a principal symbol of the state, alongside the flag and the anthem. When a soldier feels alienated from that state and has a different value system from the mainstream, the sense of alienation is transferred to the military. Furthermore, the Muslim conscript's experience of being raised in the school-family dichotomy of value systems makes altering a Muslim soldier's value system in the Soviet military exceedingly difficult.

The Soviet armed forces are merely the grounds on which a young Muslim experiences first-hand (often for the first time) the true nature of the ethnic hierarchy that exists in the USSR. Far from being a "school of internationalism," as the Soviet armed forces were referred to in crude propaganda for so many years, a Muslim conscript's military service probably only strengthens his alienation from the Soviet state and its institutions. The high profile of recently discharged military personnel in the anti-Russian riots in Alma-Ata in 1986 was only one piece of evidence showing the military's failure to socialize the Muslims into a pro-Soviet way of thinking. Indeed, the presence of recently discharged soldiers in incidents of ethnic unrest in the USSR in the last decade is unmistakable.

⁵⁷*Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 6, March 1989, pp. 59–64, translated in *JPRS-UMA*, No. 9, April 20, 1989, pp. 40–44.

⁵⁸Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Alienation," pp. 178–179.

In the Soviet military, alienation is a group phenomenon based on ethnicity; in Western militaries, it tends to be restricted to individuals. There is clear evidence that virtually all non-Russian conscripts feel a sense of alienation from the Soviet military for ethnic reasons. The Balts, for example, are highly alienated.⁵⁹ However, the Soviet Muslims constitute the largest seriously alienated group within the Soviet military and the Muslim/Slavic cleavage is especially strong because it is so multi-dimensional and fundamental; they possess the highest potential for violence against the hierarchy within the Soviet military and Soviet society as a whole.

Sociopolitical Alienation and Efficiency. The basic point in the relationship between sociopolitical alienation and the military is:

[T]he military is unable to utilize effectively and is not able to overcome civilian-generated attitudes of social hostility, indifference, cynicism, and dissensus among its recruits.⁶⁰

Sociopolitical alienation has a highly negative impact upon military efficiency—seen as a combination of morale, proficiency, and discipline—with a high degree of alienation almost ensuring low efficiency. Studies in the U.S. Army showed that

the alienated soldier is six times more likely to be considered [by his officer] very unreliable than is the nonalienated soldier. . . . Similarly, the alienated soldier is five times more likely to be rated in the lowest category in military discipline and four times more likely to be in this category in job performance than is the nonalienated soldier.⁶¹

In other words, when a soldier sees little, if any, purpose to his service, his performance declines precipitously. Since the Soviet military now has been forced to depend on some of the most alienated segments within society for a large portion of its manpower, not only is the problem of low efficiency unlikely to be corrected but, in all likelihood, there is bound to be a snowballing effect. As the inefficiency of a large component of a unit becomes no longer an isolated case but the norm, there will be consequently disastrous and demoralizing effects on the non-alienated or less alienated Soviet soldiers, including the Russians.

A measure of efficiency can be achieved with alienated and unreliable soldiers through harsh discipline and strictly enforced punishment, but such steps merely control the symptoms and do not address the

⁵⁹Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "Baltic Nationalism and the Soviet Armed Forces," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 1986, pp. 179-193; Stephen Foye, "Baltic Nationalism and the Soviet Military," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 26, June 30, 1989, pp. 22-27; Alexander R. Alexiev, *Dissent and Nationalism in the Soviet Baltic*, The RAND Corporation, R-3061-AF, September 1983.

⁶⁰Janowitz, in Janowitz and Wesbrook, *Political Education of Soldiers*, p. 72.

⁶¹Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Alienation," p. 181.

deeper level of motivation. The threat of negative sanctions cannot take the place of social compulsion and self-discipline as a soldier's motivating forces. The difference in motivation is bound to show up in combat in the form of ritualized behavior rather than active participation.⁶² Humiliating discipline in the Soviet military⁶³ is already counterproductive in terms of efficiency and it is questionable whether the military is willing or even able to enforce stricter discipline. The hazing practices in today's Soviet military are an indication of the breakdown of formal channels of authority and it is difficult to see how discipline can be strengthened under such conditions.

The most important consequence of a large segment of unmotivated and alienated soldiers in a military unit that relies on fear of punishment for cohesion is that the unit becomes unreliable. The likelihood of disintegration of such a unit in combat becomes substantial. The disintegration can take the form of a sudden collapse of the unit—mass desertion or surrender (which can rapidly spread to other units)—or it can be limited to a refusal to engage in offensive operations. These actions may be accompanied by intra-unit fighting that, in itself, would render the unit inoperable.

The Breakdown of Group Cohesion. Alienation can lead to unreliability and the potential for disintegration through breakdown in cohesion of the unit. Motivation of soldiers to perform their tasks under conditions of extreme stress stems from several types of moral involvement of the soldier with the larger collectivity. The moral involvement is

dependent on the formation of psychological bonds between the soldier and the collectivity such that the soldier believes, more or less consciously, that his own welfare and that of the group are related. Three such collectivities directly and substantially influence the soldier's compliance with military demands: the primary group [squad level], the military unit [regiment, brigade], and the national socio-political system.⁶⁴

The most capable modern armies, for example, the German army in World War II,⁶⁵ have been sustained by the three levels of moral involvement.

⁶²Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation; The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle*, Boston, Kluwer, 1982, pp. 133-148, 325-326.

⁶³Herbert Goldhamer, *The Soviet Soldier; Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level*, New York, Crane, Russak & Co., 1975, pp. 141-169.

⁶⁴Stephen D. Westbrook, "The Potential for Military Disintegration," in Sam C. Sarkesian (ed.), *Combat Effectiveness: Cohesion, Stress, and the Volunteer Military*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1980, p. 251.

⁶⁵Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, No. 12, Summer 1948, pp. 280-315.

A soldier must develop bonds of trust and solidarity with his peers. In battle, it is these bonds (at the primary group level) that keep the soldier from fleeing. Experience shows that it is at the lowest tactical level that an army either stays together or falls apart, as tactical problems quickly spread to operational and then to strategic levels. However, neither the efficacy of primary group ties nor the soldier's motivations outside the battle itself can be explained without reference to sociopolitical factors.⁶⁶ Primary groups

serve to maintain the soldier in his combat role only where there is an underlying commitment to the worthwhileness of the larger social system for which he is fighting. . . . There must be an acceptance, if not of the specific purposes of the war, then at least of the broader rectitude of the social system of which the soldier is a member.⁶⁷

The legitimacy of political and military leaders' demands upon the soldier and the legitimacy of the leadership itself underpin the soldier's sociopolitical involvement. In a reasonably well-integrated unit, the strong convictions of only a few members, often NCOs, suffice to maintain the attachment between the soldiers and society. In the Soviet case, the link between society and the military that existed (and may still exist) for a Russian soldier does not exist for an ethnically mobilized non-Russian. The commitment to the Soviet system that a Russian or an East Ukrainian NCO may have is precisely what the Muslim recruit resents the most (to make the matters worse for the Soviet military, even the Russians' and the East Ukrainians' commitment seems to be evaporating). This is the crucial feature that stems from ethnic conflict in the USSR—the unassimilated, ethnically mobilized Muslim simply cannot fit into a Soviet military that is a reflection of the Russian-dominated Soviet state.

In the ethnically mixed Soviet units, a whole range of variables that together amount to group cohesion seems to have broken down. Incompatibility of soldiers because of lack of assimilation and ethnic animosity, widely differing levels of aspiration directly due to alienation, and diverse views on the Soviet military as a whole (with many non-Russians seeing it as an occupation force) prevent the formation of cohesive units. Primary groups form within such units, but they are ethnically oriented and in a continuous state of undisguised hostility with each other. There is very little basis on which groups can establish solidarity. The military is an organization

⁶⁶Wesbrook, "Potential for Military Disintegration," p. 250.

⁶⁷Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1975, pp. 25-37.

continually preoccupied with the threat of danger [and it] requires a strong sense of solidarity if it is to operate effectively.⁶⁸

When the solidarity is weak, the military unit becomes ineffective.

Conclusions

Both the historical pattern of limited use of Muslims as well as the multitude of problems associated with a large component of the Soviet armed forces that is ethnically mobilized and seriously alienated from the Soviet military and the Soviet state indicate a crisis stage for the Soviet military. Demographics are forcing large numbers of Muslims into the combat branches of the Soviet armed forces at a time that reliability in the Soviet military is more problematic than ever. In a strictly military sense, what all this amounts to is that some of the ethnically mixed Soviet units are probably more of a liability than an asset; their performance in any military engagement with a modern military force would be poor. In the Soviet domestic political-military context, the uncertain reliability means that only a portion of the Soviet armed forces, that which is composed mainly of Slavs—notably the elite (for example, paratroopers) and some “Guards” units that have first pick of the draft—is readily available to quell any widespread separatist dissent that could erupt in the Muslim areas of the USSR. The use of units with a significant percentage of Muslims in such areas invites disaster.

⁶⁸Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, Free Press, New York, 1960, p. 175.

V. THE FUTURE OF THE SOVIET MILITARY

The idea that the Soviet military's Achilles heel is its lack of cohesion has been suggested previously. However, the one study based on primary data was rather one-dimensional, for it examined only the primary group level, it assumed that Marxist ideology was an aspect of real significance in the Soviet armed forces, and it was based on responses from ex-Soviet servicemen who served prior to 1979, before the massive influx of Muslims into the Soviet military.¹ Another study about cohesion in the Soviet military looked at all three levels of cohesion (besides the primary group), but it again relied excessively on the role of ideology for enhancing cohesion and it did not address the ethnic problem sufficiently.² Emphasis on Marxist-Leninist ideology as a cohesive force in the Soviet military—probably never a useful factor to consider in an analysis of the Soviet military—has become irrelevant under Gorbachev. The tightly controlled system of coercion, with political officers and KGB operatives upholding the facade of ideological commitment, has broken down and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to restore it. The main characteristic of contemporary USSR is that it is a state in an advanced stage of ethnic conflict. That is the primary political problem in the Soviet Union, one that a universalist ideology has obviously failed to solve.

Some analysts have raised doubts about the applicability of the concept of cohesion to the Soviet military, on the grounds that the USSR cannot be analyzed using the analytical tools developed on the basis of the Western countries' experiences. Specifically, the argument runs that during World War II, the Soviet military performed well despite a lack of close bonds between troops and their brutal leaders.³ Such an argument misses the point. One, a practical caveat, is that enormous numbers of Soviet soldiers (including many Russians) defected to the Germans and fought on the German side until the last days of World War II. Far from being opportunists, they had a very clear idea of why

¹Richard Gabriel, *An Attitudinal Portrait of the Soviet Soldier*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1980; Richard Gabriel, *The New Red Legions: A Survey Data Source Book*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1980.

²William Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat; Leadership and Societal Influence in the Armies of the Soviet Union, the United States, North Vietnam, and Israel*, National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C., 1985.

³Dale R. Herspring, "Using Emigres in Determining What Makes the Soviet Soldier Tick" (book review), *Armed Forces and Society*, Summer 1981, pp. 629-634.

they fought.⁴ However, more importantly, the argument fails to address the deeper organizational aspects of the Soviet military and changes therein.

CLASSIFYING MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

Any military organization can be classified according to the predominant type of compliance relationship it uses. The compliance relationship stems from the match between the types of power used to bring about compliance and the types of involvement of the participants. There are three types of power that can be used to attain compliance: (1) coercive (threat of physical sanctions), (2) remunerative (control of material resources and rewards), and (3) normative (allocation of symbolic rewards and deprivations).⁵ There are also three types of participants' involvement: (1) alienative (intensely negative involvement), (2) calculative (either a positive or negative involvement of low intensity), and (3) moral (positive orientation of high intensity).

Three congruent relationships emerge: (1) coercive power-alienative involvement, (2) remunerative power-calculative involvement, and (3) normative power-moral involvement. Predominantly coercive organizations use the threat of coercion to control the participants, whose involvement is one of high alienation. Utilitarian organizations that exemplify the remunerative-calculative relationship depend on incentives (for example, promotions or salary increases) for compliance. Normative organizations depend on the congruence of the organization's demands with the participant's value system for compliance. When an organization's type of compliance does not match the type of participant's involvement, compliance is unlikely; for example, a normative appeal to highly alienated participants would be ineffective.

COMPLIANCE TYPE AND THE SOVIET MILITARY

The Soviet military has been a predominantly coercive organization. During World War II, the practice of NKVD troops (positioned just behind the regular army troops) to shoot any Soviet soldier who refused to advance toward the enemy was not very different from the

⁴Catherine Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement*, University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

⁵Wesbrook, "Potential for Military Disintegration," pp. 247-248.

practices in the quintessential coercive army, the Prussian army of Frederick the Great, where noncommissioned officers were instructed to bayonet their own soldiers if they stepped out of formation or even looked around as if they were thinking of fleeing. The Soviet military paid for its organizational structure with horrendous losses during World War II, losses acceptable to the Soviet leadership.

The coercive-alienative military type corresponded to the Soviet society under Stalin; thus, the brutality within the Soviet military was not very different from the brutality experienced by millions of Soviet citizens outside of the military (for example, peasants during collectivization). In this sense, the coercive model in the military may have been inefficient but it was congruent with the soldiers' type of involvement.

Primary groups still formed in the Soviet military, since primary groups will form in any organization that requires extensive interdependence between individuals in the face of a common threat. Political distortions caused Soviet historiography to emphasize that Soviet soldiers fought for socialism. A more careful reading of memoirs of Soviet World War II veterans (as well as any conversation with a Soviet veteran) shows that interpersonal bonds were just as important in the Soviet army as in the Western armies, although their outward form was a bit different due to cultural differences. The remarkable level of resistance offered by some Soviet units—for example, in the defense of Stalingrad—shows the influence of primary group bonds in actual battle conditions. However, the relationship between officers and enlisted men in the Soviet military was different than in Western militaries because of the different organizational models. This has been a cause of some confusion, but the different organizational context does not invalidate fundamental patterns of human behavior, namely, the function of close bonds between peers in stressful situations.

A coercive-alienative military is most suited for a large, mass force. Technological changes in the twentieth century have made such a military obsolete.⁶ As the trend toward more accurate and lethal weapons continues, the modern battlefield becomes an ever more isolated place, for the low concentration of soldiers is necessary for survival. In such an environment, efficiency at performing tasks is closely related to motivational factors. The individual soldier has become more impor-

⁶Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, Free Press, New York, 1960; James Burk, "National Attachments and the Decline of the Mass Armed Force," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 1989, pp. 65-81.

tant than ever before. Under such conditions, normative-moral compliance becomes a virtual necessity.

Since the fifties, the Soviet military has used a mixture of the coercive-alienative and normative-moral types of compliance. The domination of Soviet institutions by the Russians made the Soviet military acceptable at least to the Russians who served in it. However, the Russian domination was a potential problem to those ethnic groups most estranged from the Russians—the Muslims. The problem became real when there was a huge influx of ethnically mobilized Muslims into the military. Because of Gorbachev's liberalization—which has destroyed the legitimacy of the remaining coercive aspects of the organization of the Soviet state that had survived until then—the Soviet military cannot use strictly coercive power to attain compliance from the ethnically mobilized Muslim recruits who have an alienative sense of involvement. In organizational terms, the problem is one of discongruence between the type of power and the type of involvement—a recipe for organizational collapse in times of stress. Thus, both on the grounds of efficiency under the conditions of a modern battlefield and in terms of congruence with society and the changes within it, the Soviet military must undergo some fundamental reforms.

While fundamental reform is going to be difficult to avoid, it is increasingly questionable whether reform will be enough; a serious and growing cleavage within the Russian-dominated officer corps—between the higher ranks who enjoyed the privileges of *nomenklatura* and the lower ranks who now often have a very low standard of living—is beginning to strain the functioning of the Soviet armed forces. In addition, a reform of as basic a state institution as the military rests upon changes in state structure. If the USSR does indeed change into a loose commonwealth, there will be little rationale for the continuing existence of a military that resembles the present one. Whatever form the USSR assumes, it is fairly certain that the Soviet military will shift toward a more conventional and efficient type of compliance relationship. This is so for organizational reasons—a military structure of authority and cooperation must be congruent with societal patterns, and, as the old basis of the Soviet government's legitimacy (supposedly infallible philosophical doctrine) is replaced by the more conventional standard of accountability to popular wishes, the change will be reflected in the military. The changes may take a few years and the trend may even be temporarily halted, but the long-term shift seems fairly certain.

CREATING A PROFESSIONAL SOVIET MILITARY

The calls for a professional Soviet military⁷ must be seen in the context of an organizational compliance relationship. It is a basic tenet that any military "should prefer to recruit enlistees who can demonstrate the knowledge and propensity for learning the essential skills."⁸ Since absorption of the ethnically mobilized Muslims into the Soviet military has become impossible and the continued attempt at it threatens the military's viability,⁹ the only alternative for the Soviets is to get rid of the unreliable and difficult to train elements. A volunteer, professional military ensures a calculative or moral involvement of the enlistees and reduces greatly the need for a coercive type of power to attain compliance. As the U.S. experience shows, a volunteer military would not eliminate alienated soldiers, but it would control the problem. At issue is the compulsory nature of service. Even in cases like Rhodesia and the Portugese African colonies in the seventies, there were only minor problems with the volunteer black troops (in 1977, about two-thirds of the Rhodesian military was composed of blacks, who fought other blacks to keep whites in power). It was the introduction of compulsory service that brought a serious motivation problem in Rhodesia.¹⁰

Another way to solve the problem of alienated Muslims in the military, perhaps in conjunction with the setting up of a professional military, would be to form national units that would be stationed in their ethno-territorial regions. Such a move would address the persistent concern that has emerged in the USSR in the last few years—that virtually all Soviet ethnic groups want their youth to serve in the military in their own ethnic administrative units. However, in an ethnically polarized situation, the formation of national units invites disaster, since these units could quickly become embryo national forces and turn against Russian units. Already there are claims that independent organizations in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have encouraged Muslim youth to enter the Soviet military so as to gain training in operating weapons.

⁷Alex Alexiev, "Is There a Professional Army in the Soviet Future?" *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 6, 1989, pp. 9-12; Mikhail Tsypkin, "Will the Soviet Navy Become a Volunteer Force?" *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 5, February 2, 1990, pp. 5-7; Stephen Foye, "Debate Continues on the Fundamental Restructuring of the Soviet Armed Forces," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 15, April 14, 1989, pp. 12-16.

⁸David K. Horne, "The Impact of Soldier Quality on Army Performance," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring 1987, pp. 443-455.

⁹The attempt to co-opt the Muslims by attracting them to become officers was tried during the eighties; it was a dismal failure, for applicants did not materialize. See Olcott and Fierman, "The Challenge of Integration."

¹⁰Kenneth W. Grundy, *Soldiers Without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 280.

an experience they seem to think will be valuable in any upcoming civil strife.¹¹ A regional militia (akin to the U.S. National Guard) that is primarily made up of one ethnic group is a possibility, but an extension of such a system is unlikely.

A whole host of issues related to the professional military has to await a clearer shape of the union on which the future Soviet state will be based. For example, the size, ethnic policy, and stationing principles of a future Soviet professional military would depend on its assigned missions and goals. In turn, missions of future Soviet armed forces will be dictated by the structure of the Soviet state.

¹¹Stephen Foye, "Growing Antimilitary Sentiment in the Republics," *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 50, December 15, 1989, pp. 1-4.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND THE SOVIET MILITARY

Ethnic conflict in multi-ethnic societies is not inevitable. If several diverse ethnic groups can live in relative harmony in Singapore, there is no reason why they can't in other countries. The Soviet failure to achieve inter-ethnic peace stems from policies that exacerbated status differences and existing animosities (stemming from colonial conquest and ethnically oppressive policies pursued by czarist Russia) between ethnic groups, from deteriorating economic conditions, and—in Muslim regions—from demographic pressures that combined to create an explosive combination. Ethnic conflict is notable for its intensity. Once an ethnic group is mobilized, ethnic conflict becomes difficult to control and extremely difficult to extinguish. That is the legacy of previous policies that the Soviet Union now will have to pay for. Ethnic conflict will not go away in the USSR. It has already caused an enormous problem in the armed forces and it is likely to propel the Soviet military into far-reaching reforms.

During the next few years, due to continuing ethnic tensions in the military and the probable introduction of reforms in the armed forces, a significant portion of the Soviet military is not going to be an effective force. The Soviet military will be preoccupied with its internal problems and ways of coping with them. If anything, the Soviet military leadership probably will be risk averse, for it will try to avoid situations that would openly expose its difficulties. The elite and some units composed mainly of Russians have largely escaped the ill effects caused by ethnic problems. These forces form a capable and reliable core of the Soviet military, but the performance of ethnically mixed units (especially those with a high percentage of Muslims) would be poor in any conflict.

Implications for Foreign Policy

The unfavorable state of the Soviet military has obvious implications for foreign policy. Any threat of a Soviet armed intervention, whether in Poland or in Iran, becomes less likely. In terms of the balance of forces in Central Europe, the qualitative edge of NATO soldiers over many Soviet troops should be given consideration. In the domestic context, many Soviet military units are unusable and a further build-up of MVD troops (Ministry of the Interior formations earmarked for domestic use) can be expected.

Implications for Civil-Military Relations

The situation has important implications for civil-military relations. The military (and especially the senior officer corps), reeling from unprecedented criticism and open airing of its problems, may increasingly turn to blaming Gorbachev's liberalization for its problems. Although the liberalization allowed the free voicing of problems that already existed, the military may try to shift the blame on the civilians. Every military requires that it be held in high esteem by the population—this is a basic component of the morale of the military—yet Gorbachev's liberalization has seriously eroded the prestige of the military. The open ethnic strife, combined with moves to cut the military's budget and influence and what the Soviet military must see as the giving away or negotiating away of Soviet gains of the last 50 years (position in Eastern Europe, deep arms cuts), may lead to a situation where the resentment of the civilian leadership assumes dangerous proportions within the military.

WESTERN ANALYSES OF THE PROBLEM

The events in the USSR during the last five years have taken many Western analysts by surprise. Although the experts generally understood the underlying problems and contradictions in the Soviet system, the rapid pace of the breakdown and its initiation by the Soviet leadership were largely unexpected. The open emergence of ethnic conflict—in the USSR in general and in the military in particular—was a surprise to some analysts who claimed that ethnicity was not a problem in the Soviet military and that ideological indoctrination in the Soviet military strengthened social conformity and enhanced group cohesion.¹ Such conclusions have been strongly contradicted and rendered irrelevant by all available empirical evidence.

To avoid such lapses in the future, analysts of Soviet affairs should employ a comparative perspective to a greater extent. The USSR is a society subject to similar social processes found in other countries. Comparing the Soviet case with other countries—rather than singling it out as a special, somehow inherently different society—is a useful method that pinpoints quickly where the USSR may differ from other areas and it leads to necessary questions as to why it is different. In conjunction with emphasis on independently gathered data, a comparative analysis of Soviet ethnic relations could have avoided some of the mistakes made by Western analysts.

¹Ellen Jones, *Red Army and Society: A Sociology of the Soviet Military*, Allen & Unwin, Inc., Winchester, Massachusetts, 1985.

For example, in the early and mid 1980s, a comparative analysis based on data gathered independently of Soviet controls (such as surveys of Soviet emigres) could have avoided the pitfalls of relying on the strictly controlled Soviet press and the normative, manipulated findings of Soviet sociologists who had to pay attention to the political line. Similarly, if other militaries' experiences with political education had been examined, Western analysts would not have been preoccupied with Soviet ideological education.² Furthermore, if the deeper organizational aspects of the Soviet military had been probed, it would have been found that sociopolitical training (a form of a normative appeal for compliance) has no effect in militaries using coercive compliance.

Just as Larry Watts has recently restored some sense to the literature on the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact military by thinking about the basics again,³ it would be wise to apply the basics also to the Soviet military. The Soviet polity is subject to the same patterns of human behavior as other polities and the Soviet military is a complex organization just like the Western militaries; specific Soviet differences and quirks do not change these facts. The idea that the Soviet Muslims could be socialized by the Soviet military so as to become staunch supporters of the ethnically stratified Soviet polity could not have gained acceptance if it was subjected to scrutiny according to theories of ethnicity and military sociology. The Soviet military is not a monolithic and cohesive whole, and it will continue to have ethnically based problems as long as conscription lasts.

²For other countries' unsuccessful experiments with sociopolitical education, see M. Kent Jennings and Gregory B. Markus, "The Effect of Military Service on Political Attitudes: A Panel Study," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1, March 1977, pp. 131-147; and Roland Wakenhut, "Effects of Military Service on the Political Socialization of Draftees," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Summer 1979, pp. 626-641.

³Larry L. Watts, "New-Type Socialist Armies," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 37, No. 3-4, May-August 1988, pp. 101-109.